

THE
DAUGHTER OF
A REBEL

G. VERE
TYLER

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THE DAUGHTER OF A REBEL

A NOVEL

BY
G. VERE TYLER

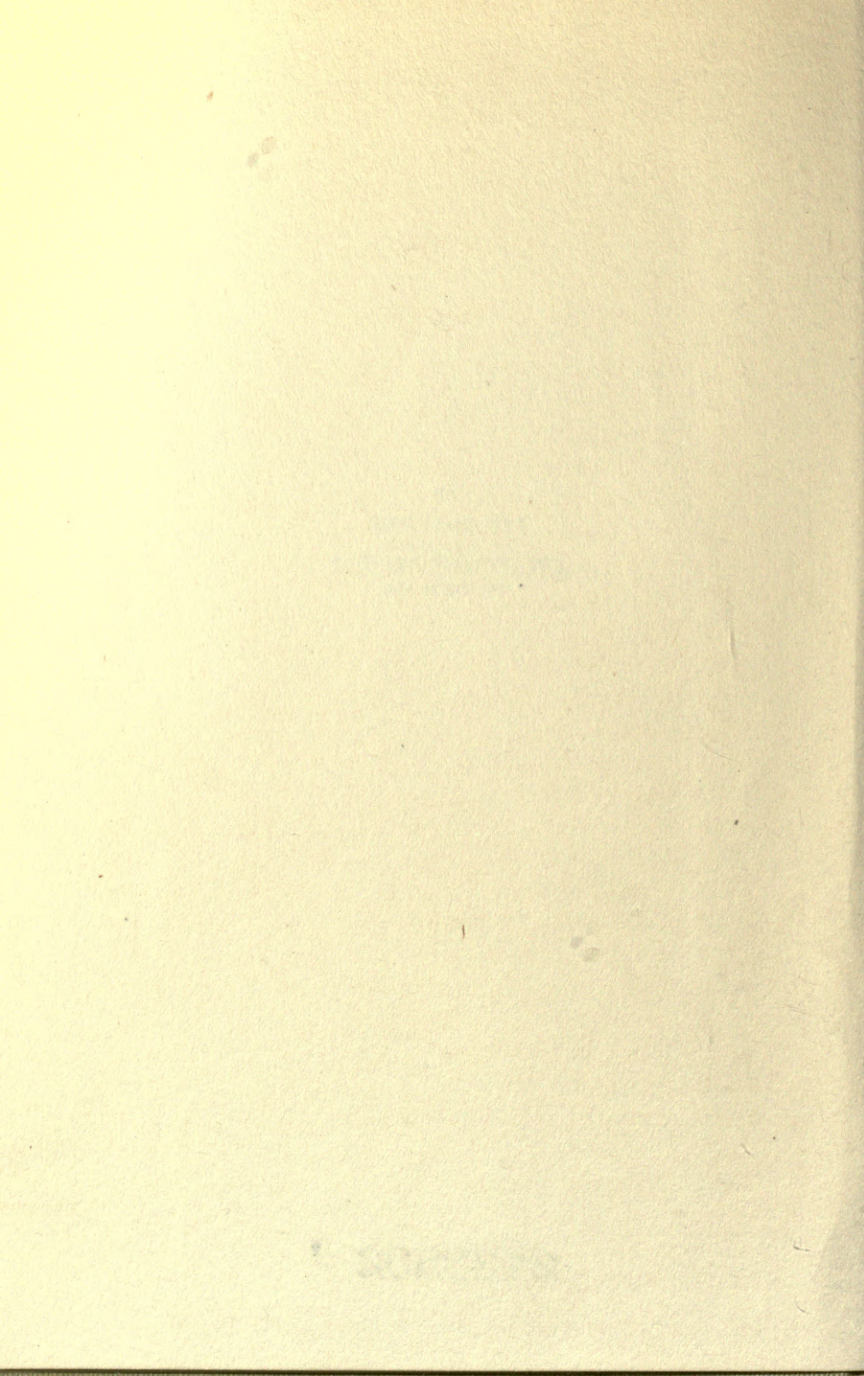


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TO
MY MOTHER
THE SWEETEST VIRGINIAN
OF THEM ALL

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BOOK I

The Daughter of a Rebel

CHAPTER I

THE GIRL

ON the third day of April in the year 1886, a girl was seated at an old rickety table in her bare little room, writing. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright. It was evident that she was much in earnest.

The room was on the top floor of a small brick house, and there were no comforts in it. The single bed was hard and uninviting. The door of the washstand was broken, as was also the spout of the pitcher. There were dull-red, well-worn shades over the windows, but no curtains. Save a narrow strip by the side of the bed, the floor was carpetless. The mirror, that reflected the girl as she sat writing, was blurred and cracked. A Bible, an old album, and a vase containing some pampas-grass, on another table, were the only ornaments of the room. There was a small rocker with an improvised seat of the selvages of flannel, the original one having long since worn away. A cheap clock ticked loudly in the center of a tall, black-painted mantel-piece. The occupant was oblivious to her surroundings.

Page Warwick was a product of the Civil War. Born when Virginia had scarcely caught her breath from flash of gun and roar of cannon, she seemed one of their sparks that would not expire.

A child of rare emotional nature, possessed of highly

imaginative perceptions, she had fed upon tales of war, its horror and despair, until these things and all they suggested had become a part of her.

She had sat on the knees of ex-soldiers and listened; she had sat at the feet of her Mammy and listened; she had sat in the pews of the churches and listened; she had sat at the firesides or on the porches of devastated homes and listened. When she grew older she visited the places formerly used as hospitals for the wounded and dying. She went to the graves of soldiers, in the soldiers' burying ground, and there with the little wooden headpieces staring at her in straight lines, lived over the tragic death of each one, as she read the name, and when she came to one who was nameless, she would feel her heart break.

She was distinctly a product of the Civil War. To her it represented a tragedy such as had never been enacted upon the earth. She saw no glory in it. The picture was grewsome, hideous, with monuments of despair on its pallid surface. All the music was funeral drums. All the participants, martyrs. At night when she would close her eyes to sleep they marched single file before her, weary and blood-stained, or she saw them *en masse* on the fields beneath the burning sun or the cold moon, and sometimes she cried out. When slavery was spoken of as a crime she thought of this crime, and a half mad laugh would break from her. When anyone spoke of the war being over, she sneered and told of the wounded in heart who still lived, of the half dead and alive victims as much a part of it as the grave is of death.

She felt so intensely that she had never stopped to think or attempt to reason. The impressions of her childhood still controlled her. The name of Grant was

associated in her mind with bloodshed. "Beast" Butler was to her a beast indeed, and she never thought of him, except as she had seen him cartooned with horns. All this was real and vital to her, and the fears of her childhood continued to dominate her. "The Yankees are coming" recalled to her the absolutely docile and horror-struck obedience that the sentence filled her with, when Mammy wanted to "scare" her to bed or good behavior.

The house in which dwelt this imaginative emotional young girl was the very poorest of her late father's possessions. It was situated in an obscure street. It had always been occupied by poor people. Sometimes they paid rent, sometimes they didn't. Her father never thought much about it. It was unimportant to him; it was home to her. The rent was paid now, it had to be because the pitiful sum was her only means of support. The people she rented it to got it cheaper by allowing her to keep a room on the top floor. She tried eating with them as another mutual benefit, but there were five children, molasses at every meal, and the man ate in his shirt sleeves. It embarrassed them and it was impossible to her.

It was her tenant, Mrs. Bartlett herself, who had arranged for her meals across the street with an old lady, a Mrs. Stebbins, who took boarders. Mrs. Bartlett, a young thing of twenty-seven, with five children and bowed down by poverty like the rest, did this out of kindness. She was always kind to Page. She never failed to tell her to call on her if she was ever sick. Page often wondered how often Mrs. Bartlett had told her this. But she was never sick, she was always well, and good, as she sometimes said disconsolately, for a long life. Yes, Mrs. Bartlett was very good,

goodness breathed forth from her whole hard-worked little body.

Page wiped the tears from her eyes and fell to thinking of her. How strange it all was. She thought of the house, the stiff, little parlor with a chair or two; the *étagère*, the antiquated piano, the red plush album, and herself up there above it all. As she thought, a child's voice came up to her in a whining wail. It was Sadie May's voice. Sadie May, the only girl and the youngest child, was the idol of the house. She was not a pretty child, and she looked stupid, like a little doll dressed up, but much of the means of the family were expended upon Sadie May, and the mother told Page one day that if that child were to die it would be her death as sure as there was a God in heaven. Page knew that she meant it.

At times this home with Sadie May and all the rest sickened her, and she would put on her hat and walk by an old house, the real home, where they all lived in the days before she was born, and gave dinners and balls and parties and danced all night, and were happy. It seemed to Page, when she heard those days recalled, that there never could have been such happiness anywhere in all the world since it was created. It was turned, the grand old house, into a hospital now; it had met a fate equal to that of the descendants of those who had lived in it, and yet she loved to go there and look at it; the sad staring windows seemed to gaze at her with pathetic recognition. There was a rose-bush in the yard that her grandmother had planted with her own hands. The matron always sent her a bunch of the first blooms. Her father's name was cut in one of the pillars of the porch. He had played on that porch when he was a little boy. Page had never played

there — it was gone, gone away from them before she could remember. She had never known it except as a hospital, but she went there very, very often. She loved to see it when the flowers were blooming, or when the moon was shedding its silver light upon it tenderly, lovingly, just as it used to. Sometimes she thought she could see her grandmother standing by the old rose-bush guarding it, and she really believed if it were cut down for some practical purpose, a thunderbolt from heaven would be directed to the spot.

CHAPTER II

REBELLION

ON this particular morning, this third day of April, 1886, she was particularly depressed. The pitiful sum due weekly for her meals, which she took across the way, had not been paid, and she had eaten little. She was half hungry. Her thoughts were tragic, her mood savage, yet gentle, and she was filled with exaggerated self-pity and pity for those like her.

In these moods she always wrote, dipping the pen in her own heart's blood, believing in a self-imposed duty to express vital facts that every one should know about. Through blinding tears that dripped upon the paper in front of her, she continued to pour her passionate thoughts, occasionally giving vent to a sob, occasionally repressing one, the words flowing from her pen, even as the tears flowed from her eyes.

Two years before she had written a little story that included a description of a negro river-baptizing, and it had been accepted for publication by a first-class magazine.

The acceptance had been accompanied by a flattering letter from the editor requesting her to submit other contributions.

This incident had revolutionized her entire existence. Her joy converted her into a creature with a brain on fire and a pen always in her hand. From that day she wrote without ceasing. She wrote of everything, the war, before the war, after the war, the soldiers, her

relatives, her friends, the negroes and of inanimate things as well. When her only pair of shoes wore out, she wrote their history and pressed her lips to them that they had served her for inspiration. She flashed her brain upon common objects, converting everything she saw into a wonder for her pen to describe. And every single thing, after the first story that she wrote, came back to her.

The effect upon her of continuous effort and continuous disappointment was at times maddening. She grew sensitive and concealed the fact that she was continuing to write, but she never ceased. She watched for the postman, met him at the door, and when he handed her the rejected manuscript, she would turn giddy and reach her room in a half-conscious condition. Every time this occurred it caused her momentary loss of courage and self-confidence.

Then it was that she would lock herself in her room, open her trunk, take out her one printed story, with the acceptance slip pinned to it, read both over again to convince herself that her effort was not a mad dream.

Not once did this little experience fail to kindle within her a new excitement and renewed determination; not once did it fail to repeat its message that she could become an author. Did not the printed words and the letter from the editor prove it? She would take out the editor's letter, that was safely stored away in a little pearl box that had belonged to her mother, and read it — the words she knew by heart — all over again.

Finally she laid down her pen, raised her head half defiantly and faced herself in the old cracked mirror opposite.

The vision that met her gaze arrested her attention and diverted it from her theme to herself. She centered upon the reflection, suddenly fascinated by her own charms. She saw, as through a mist, a fair girl with a lovely patrician face crowned in pale chestnut, gold-tinted hair, beneath which glowed, sullen and excited, a pair of exquisitely expressive gray eyes. She saw a beautiful mouth, slightly compressed, and she knew that behind the crimson lips were two rows of even white teeth firmly set. Beneath the compressed and firmly set teeth she deliberately noted the sensitive chin, tremulous, yet determined, and the full passionate throat, around which was a faded ribbon that had been washed, and beneath that a calico waist, also faded. Her face paled and a half-bitter smile parted the sullen mouth.

"That is I," she said aloud, "that poverty-stricken creature is I, Page Warwick!"

Suddenly there came to her, like an unexpected flash of lightning in a clear sky, a thought that struck and startled her. This thought had long hovered about her brain, but had never dared enter it before. It frightened her. If she could go away, free herself of old conditions, be where she would not be dominated by the opinions of others, where she could think more freely, unhampered by the vigilant surveillance of her elders and all the conventions that made up their and her life, she could become an author in reality and independent.

It was a very bold thought, her teaching having been that of any kind of independent existence on the part of woman, any effort except attention to her household duties was "unladylike."

She was a child of the old South that demanded of

its women acquiescence in and obedience to ordained laws, no matter what they were. Action was for men, not women. She tried to think of one woman who had rebelled against conditions and taken an independent step and she could not recall one. Yet, the thought had occurred to her, not only had it occurred, but it was taking possession of her. She tried to efface it by pushing back her hair and standing up. It remained and she took her seat again but with a feeling of helplessness. She was bound hand and foot, and she knew it, a slave to the ideas of others; and to all that had been established by her forefathers since Virginia had its birth. Two conflicting elements began to contend in her, pulling her different ways like wild horses. As this thought of change — of breaking way, pressed closer to her heart, her brain refused it, shrieking at her old thoughts, old laws. She saw this fierce battle and her excitement increased, till her flushed face paled. Her heart fiercely demanding change, at terrific odds with the dictates of her brain, was not yet sufficiently liberated to join in her rebellion. And she knew that her heart must fight its battle with terrific odds against her while her brain would daily be reinforced by an army that was legion. Her sympathies went out to her heart and she almost swore aloud allegiance to it, but was again attacked by fright.

She looked about her, terrified at familiar inanimate objects that might have detected her impulse — in the corners, under the bed, and through the open door, for imaginary eyes and ears that might be upon her, and all the while the desire was taking a fixed form. She tried to fight it again and held her hands hard pressed to the sides of her chair to keep herself steady,

but she knew that she had not succeeded — did not want to succeed.

At last there came over her a sense of guilt; it was the same feeling that takes possession of the soldier in battle when, overcome by the horrors of the situation, he contemplates becoming a deserter.

CHAPTER III

OPPOSITION

SUDDENLY Page remembered that it was Wednesday.

Every Wednesday, rain or shine, a visit of respect was paid to her Aunt Constance. Together they looked over her bureau drawers, straightened them out, and then sat together chatting.

Page loved her Aunt Constance with a deep and abiding love. She had been a second mother to her, but the laws of their existence and the regularity with which they were enforced, wore upon her. For the first time, however, she dreaded this visit. How to confess to Aunt Constance — how to leave Aunt Constance! These two thoughts confronted her like pistols leveled at her.

She knew that she was the light of her aunt's life, the one bright light that had atoned for a lonely, blighted existence.

She found her seated by the window, with her spectacles on, trying to make a wrapper out of an old India shawl.

The room, unlike Page's, was large and deep, and, as she did light housekeeping — light indeed it was — a tall screen hid the washstand and little kitchen arrangements. The family portraits, that she had clung to through thick and thin, lined the high walls, and some of them were very beautiful. Here she sat day

after day thinking of the past and communing with the dead and gone. Her bed and bureau and wardrobe were preserved, too, out of the wreck of her home, and as though God willed it so, this distinguished lady had a distinguished environment.

Imperiousness and reserve were as natural to her as though some secret authority had been bestowed upon her at birth. No matter what her circumstances were, and they had been lowly and trying, it was as impossible for her to appear ordinary as for the lightning-stripped oak to appear weak. As a child, Page had stood in awe of this lovely, dignified aunt, but all that had now passed away and between the two was perfect sympathy and understanding.

At present, Aunt Constance was doing the darning and mending for a family of eight in exchange for her room and for her breakfast, the only regular meal she had, she washed the tea things. She was a pathetic figure, this impoverished maiden lady, who had suffered in proud silence every day since the war. It was not the suffering, but the courage that made her pathetic. She was but one of many. It was hard on the younger ones like Page, who had to sit by and see such as she, their old darlings, in want; see them without proper clothing, without proper food, and with none of the little elegancies their hearts craved.

"Page," she said, when they had had a cup of tea and some crackers, and the two, neither very skillfully, were at work on the old wrapper, "is what I have heard true?"

"What is that, Aunt Constance?"

"That you are still shutting yourself up in your room writing?"

"It is true, Aunt Constance!"

"What are you writing about, my darling?"

"I'm writing a tragedy, Aunt Constance — I'm writing a novel of the war!"

Aunt Constance's gentle face clouded a moment. "The war, Page," she said, "the real war will never get into the books. Mortal pen could never handle it, and *you*, what do you know about the war, my dear! You weren't born until the war was over!"

"I know the results of it," said Page gravely. "I know what I see to-day!"

"My dear," she exclaimed, "thank God the war is over; let its horrors be buried."

"Aunt Constance," Page cried, "the war isn't over, only a *part* of it is over. I know the battles are all over, that those horrors are of the past; that the blood of our gallant brave, our darling soldiers, that soaked the earth, has dried; that the dying groans and shrieks that rent the air, are silenced; that the sun no longer blazes upon the faces of the dead, and that the snow no longer falls and covers them! Yes, those horrors of war are over! But there is another horror, another battlefield, where white-faced soul-and-body-starved survivors eke out a living death! Aunt Constance," she burst forth, "how can you say the war is over? Is it over for you and me, and those like us, who hardly have bread to eat — is it over for Miss Mildred Brockenborough, that sweet, timid, sensitive old lady, who sits trembling at one corner of the table, dependent for her bread on the daughter of a former seamstress in her father's home, and who doesn't wear a piece of clothing that isn't given out of charity? Is it over for those of us who are selling ourselves as wives to our inferiors? Is it over for those delicate, fragile girls who go out to work and are no more

fitted for labor than canary birds? Is it over for them when their backs ache, and their tears flow, and when they choose obscure streets to walk in to avoid meeting their acquaintances, and when every breath they draw is a breath of shame? Is it over for Mamie Allison, working in a box factory? No! We are in the midst of war — war that is waged upon our souls as well as bodies!”

“Page,” returned her aunt excitedly, “I am really alarmed about you! You are letting your imagination run away with you! Our circumstances are pitiable enough, I know, but don’t, my dear child, paint the picture worse than it is!”

“The picture *can’t* be worse than it is!” cried Page, “and what is going to become of us? What is going to become of me? Am I to sell in a store like Judith Harrison and fall off to a skeleton in six weeks and be discharged for hiding from customers rather than selling them? Am I going to be a governess at the beck and call of parvenus, whose past inferiority will revenge itself through me? Am I going on the stage like little Molly Lou Carter and be stared at by a lot of vulgar men? It killed her. It might drive me mad or I might kill someone. Am I going to keep a boarding-house, I, who wouldn’t know how to run my own home unless Mammy came to live with me!”

“Page!” exclaimed Aunt Constance in alarm, “you exaggerate terribly! You have a roof over your head and enough to eat. Try to have more faith, my child. You mustn’t allow yourself to dwell on those things at all!”

“I must dwell on them, Aunt Constance, for I mean to tell the world about them!” Tears sprang to the luminous, excited eyes. “I have a wonderful picture

to present to the world! There will be many tears shed over what I shall tell, and men and women will scoff and sneer and condemn and disbelieve, but they will not forget what I have told them. The characters, many of them, will stand up before them pale and grewsome, but their eyes will burn into their callous souls! I know of whom I am going to write; they are marching single file this moment before my eyes! I think I *should* write of these things! I think every one of us should record his or her impressions of our vanishing South! We who can only form letters should write; those of us who can paint should paint, even though the results be but daubs or shadows of the picture; embroiderers should learn to embroider scenes that will go down to the future; the wood-carver should make images on whatever work he does! For my part, I want to write about us women! The broken-down, heart-broken mothers, the old young women, the sweet, sweet, maiden ladies, purer than angels, the young girls, all poor, helpless, despairing — some patient, some impatient, we the robbed and the bereft, in a condition ruthlessly imposed, a condition the horrors of which have never been revealed. I am mad to tell of these things. If I only told of *you*, don't you think people would want to hear! Suppose I told of your efforts since the war to help your sweet self, those efforts that are more pitiful than your failures! Suppose I told how you taught little children, kept house for the "poor white trash," who treated you as a servant; how you sewed and embroidered and made pickles, and of what you are doing now!"

The girl's splendid eyes filled with tears. "There are others like you, Aunt Constance, whose lives are

poems, that if told should uplift the world and teach of courage! I want to tell these things — I must! I feel impelled to; I want everybody to know about us — we the living victims of war! We are history — everything about us is history! You are history, this old shawl," Page lifted it tragically in her hands, "is history, and I must write this history, Aunt Constance — I've got to! There seems to me something superlatively grand and sublimely touching in it all!"

She paused while a shudder that she controlled quickly passed over her.

"I want, also," she burst forth again, "to write about our poor colored people. Our dear old servants, helpless as children, dragging wearily along a hopeless road to the door of shame and despair. I read in the papers the other day of an old colored woman who fell down outside the gate of a poor-house and shrieked and screamed, and bit at the people who tried to make her enter it. She went mad for the moment. To-day, I read that she is very docile, just sits there rocking her body and crooning. I want to tell about her — how *I* see her!"

"Page, if you were to, you would only be called a sensational Southerner."

"I am a sensational Southerner!" exclaimed Page. "Oh! Aunt Constance, you don't know how my brain burns with these things! You don't know the visions I have that I could put into words! If only I could be away from the old conditions that not only oppress but hold me down, if I could go away, be separated from —"

"Page!"

Aunt Constance's voice was a gasp and her face paled.

"Well," echoed Page, breathlessly.

"You mean that you want to go away — leave Richmond?"

"I do!" She put up her hands. "Oh! Please don't, Aunt Constance! — don't let that look come into your face! I can't bear the idea of giving you pain, but I do want to go away. I want to be alone and find out about myself and what I can do! I may as well tell you," she continued recklessly, "that I'm thinking of selling my little house — the real estate men have been trying to get me to sell for months. They want to put up a row of tenements — and I want to go where I can hide away and work until I accomplish my purpose of becoming an author!"

Aunt Constance's face was death-like.

"Page!" she half shrieked, "do you know what you are saying! You, a Page, a Warwick, my *niece*, thinking for one moment of putting your feet in the North! Why I would remain in Virginia if it meant starvation, if the land was a smoldering fire and the rivers had all dried up! I'm ashamed of you!"

"Aunt Constance," began Page awkwardly.

"My child, what did your father do? What did they *all* do when not alone starvation stared them in the face, but rifle balls were flying at them like hail? They stood their ground, their Virginia ground! Think of them! Think of Benny, my poor brother, shot to pieces and dragging that flag up the hill and then falling dead beside it! And we, we women, we who inspired them and urged them on to their death, are *we* going to falter and faint by the wayside?"

For a moment, Page gazed into the pallid horror-struck countenance, then she sprang forward and put her arms passionately around the fragile form.

"Forgive me, Aunt Constance, please forgive me!" she cried, and broke into tears.

"Why, my child," Aunt Constance exclaimed, all tenderness now, as she embraced her, "we have to bear what the good Lord has seen fit to put on us to bear. Would you be a traitor — a traitor to old Virginia?"

They were interrupted by a middle-aged lady whom half the town called Cousin Betty. She entered joyously with a little jar of brandy peaches and some sweet pickles in her hands.

"They were given to me, dear," she said, offering them to Aunt Constance, "but I had a feast where I got them, and I just pass them on."

She indulged in a merry laugh that enlivened things.

"I am quite wealthy, this morning," she cried; "I've raffled off my old inlaid desk!"

"Cousin Betty!" Page gasped, "not your beautiful inlaid desk!"

"Oh, yes, my dear, but it doesn't matter. Mattie Harvey won it and, poor child, she'll send it back."

Page laughed. "In the meantime," said Cousin Betty, "I have the money! Whenever I get hard up," she continued, "I raffle some of my useful or useless valuables! It's exciting and it keeps me going!"

"Betty," said Aunt Constance, recovering herself, "I couldn't do such things to save my life!"

"Well, my dear Constance, I don't suppose you could, but *I* can and that's the difference between us. We can't be all alike, you know, and of course, it's a blessed thing we can't!"

"I sometimes wonder," said Aunt Constance in a suppressed voice, "what we are all coming to!"

"Oh, so do I," exclaimed Cousin Betty airily, "and," she added, "to think of the things we do have to do!"

If it wasn't for all the old things I have and which I raffle, I'd actually be at my wits' end at times. But I can't believe that the good Lord has entirely forgotten us, though sometimes it seems so! Both of those old houses of mine are vacant," she added.

"Oh, how dreadful," echoed Page.

"Yes, it is. I haven't been able to put any repairs on them and the people, good souls, were actually afraid they would tumble down on them. Surely," she went on, laughing heartily, "I'm in a dilemma. If I appropriate the rent to fixing up the houses, I have nothing to live on, and if I don't appropriate it to fixing them up, the people can't live in them and pay me the rent, so what on earth am I to do?"

"I declare I don't know," and Aunt Constance could not resist a little laugh with the others. But suddenly she buried her face in her hands and began to cry.

"My dear Constance!" Cousin Betty cried, "what is the matter?"

"It's Page," said Aunt Constance, freeing her face and looking out through tear dimmed eyes, "she's thinking of going away."

"Good gracious, are you paying attention to Page's nonsense? She always has some outlandish ideas in her head. It's this shutting herself up writing a lot of silly stuff that's turning her head. You've got to stop that, Page," she said, turning to her, "leave the writing and all that kind of thing to the men, dear. The George Eliots and George Sands and all those masculine creatures! Why, if your father and grandfather were to hear of these tendencies of yours up in heaven, they would come down to set you straight. You're mighty lucky to be able to live on the top floor

of your little house and with enough to eat. Under the circumstances, you ought to be content!"

"Oh, I know it, Cousin Betty!" exclaimed Page, "I ought to be!"

"Do you know what else you ought to do," said Cousin Betty. "You ought to marry David Lee. In that way, what with renting your house, you could all live very comfortably."

Page laughed hysterically. "Marry Dave and live in his solemn old prison with his mother doing her duty and his Uncle Ran reading law and chewing tobacco all day! I couldn't do it! I know what marriage means these days! It means poverty and toil and —"

"It means happiness to the woman who loves her husband, no matter *what* the conditions are!" Cousin Betty interrupted hotly.

"I don't believe it, Cousin Betty! They may think they are happy, because they've been taught to think marriage means happiness, but it wouldn't mean happiness to me!"

"Page!" interrupted Aunt Constance reprovingly.

"You don't know what you are talking about, Page. Your Aunt Constance and I must look after you more," said Cousin Betty. "Put your hat on and let's go out somewhere and change our thoughts. We'll go around and see old Mrs. Paterson. When you get back home, you'll think you are mighty well off!"

In the street the brightness of the spring day met them. It had rained the night before, the damp bricks of the pavement, drying in the hot sun, sent up a warm breath that touched their faces, but a gentle breeze greeted it from above and the early leaves of the trees, still damp, were quite dazzling.

"This is a beautiful world, my dear, and the kindness in it is sufficient to keep joy in us," said Cousin Betty after a silence of a couple of blocks, during which Page had been absently listening to the twittering of the birds. "Even old Mrs. Paterson has much to keep life up and be thankful for. The Guild members have put in and hired old Cynthia regularly for her now, and it is a great comfort to her. The two sit and talk by the hour of old times. Old Mrs. Henderson scolds Cynthia every morning as a last remnant of her power, but Cynthia says, 'She ain't no more'n a child, en what she keer, enyhaw, what old Miss say.'" Cousin Betty laughed. "I tell you, though, it's a great come down; the old lady entertained royally when I was a little girl. They had their private wharf and I don't know how many slaves!"

"She looks like a mummy now," said Page solemnly, "and her hands lying on her old black velvet skirt are like shrunk lily leaves."

"Everything looks like something else to you, Page," said Cousin Betty with a shade of impatience. "Old Mrs. Paterson's hands don't look one bit like shrunk lily leaves. They are the hands of a delicate old gentlewoman, that's all!"

"I wonder if I am going to develop into that kind of an old gentlewoman or become a helpless dependent like poor old Miss Mildred?"

"No," laughed Cousin Betty, "because David Lee isn't going to let you."

"Oh! Dave," Page returned, flushing, "that's out of the question! It seems to me we are all tending towards something terrible!" she added tragically.

"We are all tending towards what the good Lord has in store for us, Page. The trouble is you are letting

your imagination run away with you. Your talk of leaving home, my dear, is preposterous. The writing fever is bad enough, but if you have it, and have got to go through it, home, where everybody loves you and will overlook things, is the place for you. I wonder *why*," she added, turning sharply upon her, "you can't make up your mind to marry David — he loves you, has a comfortable home to take you to, and that would end all your burdens. And let me tell you this, Page: you should put that wild thought of going away out of your mind *forever*! You are very dear to us all, Page; you have no idea how dear, and I'm sometimes wicked enough to wonder how even heaven could be sweeter than our dear old Virginia. Why sometimes in the morning when I go out for a walk, it's so sweet out of doors, the air is so fresh and the breeze hits me in the face so delicately and the sky all over me is so blue that I feel it's not so much that we love Virginia as that Virginia loves us. I wish you would promise me to never speak again as you did to-day, that is, unless you want to break your Aunt Constance's heart!"

Page made no reply, and they walked on in silence until they reached the little rose-covered frame house in which Mrs. Paterson occupied a rear room on the first floor, which opened out on a small porch into the back yard. Soon Page was listening with rapt attention to the conversation of the four women, for Aunt Cynthia, seated on Mrs. Paterson's little hair trunk, which was probably over a hundred years old, took part. But while she listened outwardly calm and deferential, a sharp analysis of the lives of these people and their topics of conversation was going on in her mind, until gradually, as the sun began to lower and

desert the little porch, a settled melancholy was upon her. When they reached the street, however, her spirits rose. The visit to her Aunt Constance and to this impoverished old gentlewoman, living upon memories and false sentiment, the latter tyrannized over by an old negress, had given courage to her heart that leaped at one more battle gained in its behalf.

"Constance," Cousin Betty said, as Page parted from them at a corner, "you leave Page to me. She will stay right here and marry David Lee — that's what Miss Page will do!"

"You don't know her, Betty, she has such a strong will!"

"So have I a strong will! Now, I tell you what we'll do! We'll just take a trip down the James River to Fielding Peyton's, carry Page along, get Dave there at the same time, and I warrant ten to one the whole matter will come to a head. Now you see!"

"Do you think so, Betty?" Aunt Constance asked wistfully.

"Of course I do! Now don't say a word; I'm going to pay the expense!"

"Dear Betty!" Aunt Constance exclaimed.

"Dear *you!*" said Cousin Betty. "You are in need of a change — a breath of country air will do you a world of good!"

CHAPTER IV

VANISHING HOMESTEADS

THE next morning it was raining hopelessly. Page thought dismally, as she often had before, that it could never rain anywhere, except Richmond, in just this way. She looked a while through the blurred mist and at the regular little rivers that ran through the reddish earth of the streets, experiencing a satisfaction in the terrific downpour as if it were some kind of an outlet to her own feelings. Then she dressed herself and went over to the house opposite for her breakfast.

The rent had been paid her. She felt like a criminal when she took it, and she paid Mrs. Stebbins, and Mrs. Stebbins felt like a criminal when she took it, and so these war-impooverished beings lived. When Page left the dining-room, old Mrs. Stebbins followed her to the basement door, and put her big, soft, motherly arms around her.

"Don't worry so, honey," she said. "You haven't eaten enough in a week to keep a bird alive. Have I ever pressed you for your board?"

"No, Mrs. Stebbins, no, no, never! You're always good and kind to me and everybody, and we are always owing you." She held the old woman close. "That's what hurts so," she cried. "You would go on feeding us if we never paid — go on wearing your poor, dear self out!" She freed herself. "What a desperate set we are who gather around your table, Mrs. Stebbins!" she exclaimed.

"Lord, child," said Mrs. Stebbins, "as long as we are kind to one another, what does it matter? What hurts me is your holdin' back about eatin' because you're behind a few dollars. Honey, sometimes I don't know which has paid me and which ain't, I jess take what's handed me, thankful to God."

"That's no reason, Mrs. Stebbins," said Page hotly, "why we should impose on you!"

"Miss Page," answered Mrs. Stebbins, while a happy look crossed her dear old face, "nobody ever imposed on me in my life! What's givin' a few meals now en then? Honey, I love everybody that I has to feed, whether they pay or not. I believe I love old Miss Mildred more'n any."

Page left this old lady with a sweet feeling of holiness upon her, but she knew that it would not prevent her pride from stinging her if she hadn't the money for her the next time.

Before she crossed the street, she stood for a long time looking at the little house she lived in and those on either side that formed the block.

It was very quaint and pretty, this little block of homes. The houses, most of them small, simple, brick structures, being in the hands of the real estate people, were ready at a moment's notice to be torn down and cast into oblivion. Each one had its yard and particular characteristics and flowers. Page knew all these flowers as she knew people, the rose-bush at the corner, with snow white blossoms, the pink one that climbed up the side of a falling chimney; the little yellow one just inside a certain gate, that protected itself by briary stems and bloomed, year after year, ahead of all the rest, with airy impudence — she knew them all; the scarlet sage, the hollyhocks,

the syringa bushes, the mimosa trees, the little patches of cowslips, the sweet peas clinging to rotting sticks, the snowballs, the lilies, white and yellow, and for a long while now every blossom owed its life to her, for when she spoke the word, they would bloom no more. Suddenly she loved all these flowers and the sad, broken-down little homes with a peculiar passionate tenderness, and they all seemed to look reproachfully at her and the dewdrops she fancied were their tears.

She walked to the corner. There was an old deserted house here whose owner, having sold out ignominiously on the first opportunity, had left for parts unknown. The house was decaying, but attempted to conceal this by covering itself with vines as the consumptive's hectic flush conceals the ravages of his disease. The fences were partly down, the greenhouses smashed and caved in, the grounds and paths overgrown with weeds. It was desolation, but still a few flowers bloomed there. She looked in their tender faces and thought of Mrs. Paterson and her Aunt Constance and many others. Their fences were down, their windows smashed, wild weeds of poverty were choking them, and yet they bloomed on, scarcely knowing why in the midst of devastation. She thought a long while, leaning against one of the old decrepit fences and then her mind again reverted to this little block of homes whose continued existence she held in the hollow of her hand. Her heart went out to it anew, and fingers seemed to clutch at it, because, in spite of all, she saw stretched before her in a straight hideous line the row of brick tenements. .

CHAPTER V

DREAMS UNVEILED

AT eight o'clock in the evening, she was seated at her little window looking out, first at the boarding-house opposite, where the gas flames, all at half pressure out of deference — gas-economy had become a madness in this neighborhood — were burning dolefully, apparently without interest in their duty of lighting up, and then at the dark shadows that appeared and vanished either in one direction or the other.

Her mind was active planning a thousand schemes, a thousand excuses, first of all to her Aunt Constance, and this one and that one, provided she should go away.

Suddenly David Lee appeared out of the gloom approaching the house with his slow, graceful stride. She knew him a block away, and against her will her heart leaped to her throat and throbbed.

Not only had her name always, even from childhood, been coupled with his, but she knew also that he had influence over her, half hypnotic, that she had always found difficult to resist. With her present intentions, he assumed the form of a partly feared, partly inspired enemy. Dave was the one she would find it hardest to fight; the one who would stand like a rock between her and the sea of self-realization she longed to plunge into.

Mrs. Bartlett came to the foot of the steps and called her.

She answered but remained seated afterwards a full five minutes. Finally she arose, descended the two flights of stairs slowly, and a few moments later confronted him, standing in the center of Mrs. Bartlett's stiff little parlor.

Close and musty it was, its carpet of great garlands of faded roses giving out the faint odor of time. As Mrs. Bartlett, like the rest of her neighbors, economized in gas, a small lamp was burning on one end of the piano. It threw a circle of light on the dingy ceiling and lit up a wreath of immortelles, under a glass case, that had once decorated the coffin of a dead relative, but were now hanging on the wall. The sofa upon which they sat was hard and small and covered in horsehair. Hanging above their heads was a chromo of the Savior nailed to the cross, and over the mantel-piece, above a framed photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett in wedding attire, was another picture of some very ripe fruit tumbling out of a basket.

Never was there more forbidding stage for a young lover bent upon pleading a difficult cause, and Dave, with a kind of half smile, took this in. Then a look of sadness crossed his delicate features. It was a picture of the grim present, as the home he had just left was a picture of the mellowed past. He wondered for a moment what the picture of the future would be.

"Your Cousin Betty took tea with us last night," he began presently, leading Page to the small horsehair sofa and seating her beside him.

"Yes?" asked Page.

There was a pause and then he added with attempted levity:

"She rather shocked mother by telling her of your talk about going away."

"I have no doubt that the idea will shock everyone — at *first*," Page replied with a nervous laugh. "I suppose it is also a shock to you."

"Shock?" Dave answered quietly, "I would consider your putting into effect such an idea something like a tragedy."

"Why?"

"In my life."

She looked up at him, her eyes lit by a sudden luminosity.

"Dave," she said, "I know how perverse this idea of mine seems, and yet the time has come for me to make some kind of change. I have received another offer for this house. Those real estate men I told you of want it more than ever. Their intention is to tear down this whole block and put up a row of tenement houses. They have gotten possession of all but this one. When I do leave here, I want to do something to make my own living, and New York seems to me to be the place to do it, unmolested and in my own way. With the money," she spoke rapidly, "I receive for the house, I can go!"

"*Why* do you want to leave home, Page?"

"To write," she answered, flushing hotly.

"Can't you write here — haven't you been doing so?"

"Yes, but not successfully. I want to be alone — to be separated from my present conditions! I want," her voice was a bit unsteady, "a small corner and isolation — I want — I do not know how to explain it — to realize myself in order to express what that self contains. Here I am, like so many others, a part of the whole — I do not dare to be myself!"

"Have you no thought whatever," he asked a bit

sternly, "of our marriage as the solution to all this mental unrest?"

She looked squarely at him. "No! For there are rights of my being that cry out for what marriage could never supply! Marriage! Marrying and, as they call it, settling down for life, is just what I don't want — I want to live!"

"Page," exclaimed Dave sharply, "marriage is a woman's life!"

"It isn't! I've seen enough of marriages in our desperate circumstances. Women become the slaves of men and men become the slaves of women. You know that it is so, Dave; you see it with your own eyes every day. Marriage!" she laughed hysterically, "what have we, such as you and I, to do with marriage?"

He half-smiled into the lit up eyes. "I have never regarded marriage in that light," he replied. And then the smile died and a glow, similar to that in her own eyes, lit his. "To me marriage is a divine luxury, a holy joy; a mad but sacred passion that obliterates conditions and makes of the prison house a palace. The ideas that take possession of my brain when I dare think of marriage in connection with you are so fine, so lofty, so dazzling, that if I gave them full play, they would build a monument before your eyes that would shut out the world and make you a recklessly willing captive!" He followed his words with a low triumphant laugh that stirred her.

She felt the spell of him, the charm of his poetic personality and marvelous voice, the voice of the speaker, the born orator, the man who makes music out of words, dominating her as it always did, and she resisted it.

"Captivity," she cried, "I don't want captivity. I want freedom! Freedom to be myself — to work out my own destiny. My mind is full of wonderful dreams. These dreams are always with me, no matter how I strive to put them from me. If only I *could* put them from me, and go on living out my life as every one else does! But I can't! No sooner do I make the attempt than they rise up and tear at my brain. When I close my eyes at night, I see visions that blind me, and I want to write out these visions and give them to the world and have the world applaud them. I can't quell this; ah! Dave, it may not be noble or great to feel this way, but the call is stronger than I — it hardens my heart to all that I hold sacred; it make me at times utterly unworthy in my own eyes. When I see myself turning my back on all those who love me and whom I love, I hate myself! But I do turn away! I've grown intolerant of duty, these duties that seem to be crushing everyone!" Her eyes shot forth a dismal gleam. "I am so tired of living in hideous poverty — of seeing it — breathing it," she waved her hand, "every day, every hour of my life!"

She leaned her back against the hard sofa and closed her eyes. Dave studied her wistfully. She was so rare, so feminine, so lovely and so childishly unconscious of the world she was contemplating, that it made him sick with fear. How could he — how did he dare — lift the veil that would show her why it would be a tragedy not alone for him, but for her, a young, innocent, inexperienced girl, to even contemplate the step. It left him dumb.

His face had grown pale, the light gradually faded from his eyes and a stern pathetic sadness filled them.

Presently he rose and stood in front of her, still gazing upon her face with its closed eyes. He understood her perfectly; in heart, brain, and temperament. She was an open book to him — one that he had been reading all his life and knew word for word. In this moment, she was a tired, worn-out child to him who had traveled a weary, rocky road, and who fancied she saw alluring lights of a strange city ahead. She was a sick child whom he longed to take in his arms and comfort and make forget its pain. All her life passed in one swift second before him and wrung his heart. He seemed to see into her very soul — all its desires — aspirations — due to a violent imagination. Then suddenly the blood rushed to his face. What had he to offer her? Himself, and she did not find him sufficient. He spoke very gently to her as her eyes opened and met his own.

“Let’s go out on Gamble’s Hill,” he said, “it’s beautiful there anyway.”

She rose absently and walked in silence with him to the streets and then on and on, still in silence, until they reached the familiar place.

CHAPTER VI

THE LOVER'S APPEAL

THE air was warm as they stood there on the old hillside. The heavens, bursting with lights, seemed each moment lowering upon them. Below and in front of them against a background of velvety black night, the Tredegar Iron Works gleamed red and lurid. Over the trestles, the trains crawled, looking in the distance like illumined snakes. The men, bare to the waist, were appallingly grotesque, yet picturesque, and between them and in front of the iron works rolled the river, quiescent and peaceful, reflecting all the power and majesty of the scene.

They stood for the most part enveloped in darkness but occasionally lit up by the sudden lights that glowed steadily. For a few moments, Page observed Dave closely. His dark eyes were looking over her head far beyond her, his thin lips were tightly pressed, his features were set in a tense stare.

She called his name once, twice, three times. She called him then sharply, and he turned slowly and, bending his gaze upon her, lashed her with a glance.

"Page," he exclaimed in a repressed voice, "you've got to give up these wild ideas of yours — these dreams or whatever you choose to call them. You could never, even though they took you to the farthest corners of the earth, be able to realize them, because you could not descend to the level of them — never depart sufficiently from yourself and all that you were born to.

For a moment what you said so astonished me that I stood breathless in the contemplation of the impression. But now I must talk to you, and you must listen! I can understand what influences you but I cannot be in sympathy. To sacrifice all that one holds sacred for the possibility of acquiring fame and comfort, even the very pomp and splendors of the world, is as abhorrent to me as enduring and witnessing poverty seems to be to you. Since the history of the world is full of such instances, there must be some excuse for it, but that the poison should have entered *you* whom I hold so sacred! You are talking of taking this precious body away to a strange and unknown land, a land that it seems to me must be to you always strange. Do you forget that the body is the home of your soul! Can you take your soul to New York, Page, can you? Is it the place for it? Is it?" His voice, with its rising inflection, was musical on the night air, and stirred her so that words died in her throat.

"I know you so much better than you know yourself, know that your dreams are your life, but I honestly believe sweeter dreams can come to you in your little attic room here than in a palace in New York. Believe me, your dreams would be dispelled there, and the very purpose of your going thwarted. Of all the people in the world *you* are the least suited to New York. They speak English there, yes, but it will be a foreign tongue to you, and their ways will be foreign ways to you. You do not realize it now, for you are blind!" He laid his hands gently upon her shoulders. "It is your youth pent up with the desire for expression that blinds you. Oh! That I could take the bandages from these sweet, sweet eyes

and make you see! Listen to me! There are times, dearest heart, when we all want to embark upon the ocean of the world with our song, but is it wise — is it wise for you? No, no, my beloved; believe me it is not wise. Only one thing is wise for you, Page — my love! Come with me even though the road seems dark to you! Come to my old sacred home and forget your desire for fame and the vulgar world. I promise you something better than fame, better than the world can give; I promise daily feasts of love with God's seal upon them. The happiness I want to give you is unthinkable; if you could only see a shadow of it you would fall into my arms! Page! Are you listening to me? You *cannot* go to New York — it would blight my life and be your ruin!"

She turned and looked at him as his voice ceased, and caught all the radiance of his beauty. His youth, his ardor, his glorified passion for her flashed upon her gaze. A slight moisture stood out on her forehead, but her eyes lowered before him.

He felt the significance of these lowered lids. She was resisting him — refusing to follow him. Tears gushed to his eyes and he became a suppliant. "Give up these ideas!" he cried, taking her hands up in a sharp grasp. "There are times when one, no matter what his feelings are, should sacrifice them in a surrender. You cannot go to New York, Page! Who there would understand you, your little joys, your little sorrows, your peculiar Southern way of viewing things, the sacred thrills that generations have made possible? It is not so easy to learn new ways. I know too well that your future often looms up dark before you, but you can put it in my hands — make it *my* worshipful care! You see lights in the distance

beckoning you, but those lights will vanish at your approach and always beyond you you will see other lights. That is your nature, your eyes are fixed on the beyond — ahead of you, so that you more than anyone need some one to guide your footsteps. What you require is *not* freedom but to be bound hand and foot by love, to find *all* your life in that. Do not be blinded, Page; poor as I am, little as I have to offer, my love will make up for everything! I know that I am the one man on earth capable of understanding you, and therefore the one man on earth for you and life by my side the only life for you!”

“Dave,” she answered almost in a whisper, “listen to me!”

He pressed her hands to his hot lips. “I will! Speak, my love, tell me what I am to hear!”

“Dave, I may be blind, as you say, but my heart does not respond to the life you describe. While you were speaking, with my mind’s eye, in one flash I saw into a thousand homes in Richmond all built upon the same lines, no variety. The keynote of every life repression — repression of self and obedience to the inexorable, cruel authority of custom. I saw thousands of women obliterated in ideas of wifehood. This obliteration of self, even for the sake of the love you offer, does not appeal to me!”

He caught her hands. “Page, my darling! What are you saying?”

She freed them. “No, let me go on. Before I surrender myself to love, obliterate myself in love, I want to see what that self is — what is contained in it. That is why I want to go away — go where I shall not be afraid to look myself in the face and say what are you and be free to take the answer! I be-

lieve there is something more in life than to become a wife! Why merge my personality into yours before I even know what that personality contains, demands, or is capable of?"

Each word she spoke stabbed him to the heart, plunged a knife into all the preconceived ideas by which he had lived and which made women sacred. It seemed to him that the blood flowed from his heart and left it dry and aching. She became a stranger to him, a stranger who had ruthlessly insulted all that he held sacred. He was stung to the quick, and for one brief moment hatred of her staggered him. This strange feminine apparition that had suddenly appeared before him and boldly and defiantly planted her feet upon all that he revered. Then she became Page again, the angel woman he had adored all his life, flaunting her wings in his face and making ready to fly away from him. A sudden fury possessed him as he laid his hands heavily on her shoulders and lowered a fiery gaze to hers. "You've got to love me," he cried, "got to, you understand, with your whole heart and soul, so that nothing else counts in your life!"

To his surprise, she laughed in his face.

In a flash, while stung to the quick, he recognized that a new battle was to be fought if he hoped to frustrate Page's intentions and win her — and no actual thought of renouncing that hope had occurred to him — a new battle that involved the use of his brain as well as his heart.

He was not only to dissuade her from a false step, but he was to tear down and make her trample under her own feet a flag that she had raised to new ideas of existence that had no more place in the environ-

ment of their lives than had the song of birds at the bottom of the sea. As he thought thus, a new feeling of anger, coupled with a physical passion for her, before unrecognized or not admitted, burnt in him like a flame, while outwardly he remained as passive as the stolid earth beneath their feet.

Suddenly a sob escaped her, and she attempted to fling herself against him, but he gently pushed her from him.

It was past eleven o'clock. All about them was darkness, with the little flickering gas flames of the old street lamps struggling at intervals. In front of them the Tredegar Iron Works Foundry went on with its work. The men were still moving about in the flames; coming as though out of the earth, long rails of red-hot iron, were apparently handled with their bare hands.

Dave's eyes were fixed on this scene, but his mind had awakened to action. For twenty-five years he had lived with a man's dreams but without definite purpose. In one flash with beat of his heart at a woman's cruel laugh, it came to him. He put her hand on his arm and led her away in silence.

CHAPTER VII

A PRODUCT OF WAR

AT her door, he parted from her almost without a word, and walked slowly home.

Acute melancholy oppressed him. For the first time in his life he had opposed a woman by the use of his brain. Had he taken advantage of Page's mood to press her to him in a fierce embrace and implant kisses upon her lips he would have possessed a momentary control of her. But he had recognized in a flash that this would have been to put himself in her power.

To control Page, through his love and magnetism, she would have to be constantly under his influence, in his presence. That being out of the question, apparently, although he did not entirely admit it, for the present, he must use his brain as a weapon against her for his own defense. His fury spent, this sent a little spasm of pain through his heart such as the parent feels who must cruelly correct the child, or the master who raises the whip in the field over an over-enthusiastic and unmanageable hunting dog. It would have been very sweet to have taken advantage of her mood, fold her to his heart in a lover's embrace and enjoy the sweetness of lips that had ever since he could remember been to him a tantalizing challenge.

Suddenly he felt a sense of victory and pride in the strength he had manifested, that encouraged and lent him ardor as to possibilities in himself. His pace

quicken, and he reached his home only half-conscious of having covered the distance.

As he entered the front door and stood in the old hall, with its well-worn oilcloth covered floor, and ancient massive furniture, a feeling of weariness at his own past inactivity overpowered him. Like Page, he was a war-product and the inertia of his vanquished land had been a part of his existence.

He entered the library where a low light was always left burning for him, and just as Page had sat in her little attic room and contemplated her environment, he stood here contemplating his.

The family consisted of his mother, her brother, and himself.

The house proper belonged to his Uncle Randolph, who, at the close of the war, closed his law office, removed all his books to his home, and took in his sister, widowed through the war, and her son David.

The house was in a somewhat dilapidated condition, in fact, in a very dilapidated condition, but Uncle Randolph, who had been a brilliant, shrewd lawyer, had accumulated some wealth outside of his slaves, and so had managed to retain his home. The wealth had slipped away, but the house remained intact, without mortgage, and the only struggle connected with it was meeting the taxes. Beyond the use of the house, and the donation of his small income, Uncle Randolph did nothing. Broken in spirit, yet resentful, he simply lived, like many others of his generation, a stubborn, practically useless existence.

He was a man of powerful personality, tall, somewhat inclined to stoutness, with a scholarly, majestic countenance. He did absolutely nothing but eat his meals, read his paper and his law books. When com-

pany came, he occasionally took part in the conversation, but often it was only a glimpse of him, seated in his old high-backed leather chair, reading, that was vouchsafed them. He chewed tobacco, and in the summer spat over the rail of the porch and in the winter into the fireplace.

Very much had been done for David by his mother and his Uncle Randolph all his life, and he had never been able to convince himself that he was worthy of their sacrifices. In fact, his young eyes had gradually opened upon so much hopelessness that hopelessness had become a part of his childhood. Bread was of so much consequence that it was quite easy for him to feel that everything should be sacrificed to producing it. If ever ambition dawned, as it often did like a painful flame burning in his brain, he stifled it as something of which, in the circumstances, a man should be ashamed, as a kind of selfishness not to be tolerated. What he wanted to do was to work, work with his hands, his whole body, no matter what at, so long as he was of use. He would drive a street car, be a brakeman on the railroad, be a foreman in a factory — what did it matter? He resented his mother's and his Uncle Ran's restrictions, their forbidding him to go out as his friends did — these friends who were heroes in his eyes, who worked from morning till night at some hard and uncongenial occupation. He felt that he was living upon them like an invalid.

The days when a man could be an idler and a scholar were over, and yet that was the life, against his will, he had lived. He was sick of daily sacrifices for his sake. At six years of age, he resented his mother's teaching school in the basement that he might have about him the stimulation of other pupils, but that was

how his education began, and to this day that gloomy room, with its low fire and his mother's patient, fervent face, stung him. When the day arrived for him to go to college and perfect himself in law, there were two pale faces, whose problem was solved by his Uncle Ran mortgaging the plantation upon which he and his forefathers had been born. The burden of these sacrifices burnt into his soul. He was never reconciled to them.

"Mother," he would say when a little child, "how can I sit upstairs in comfort studying while you are downstairs washing dishes?"

"Because," she would answer brightly, "you are the young lord."

And then he would reply bitterly, "It is your *pride*, mother, that makes you forbid me to go to work, and it is only my deference to it that controls me."

"Suppose it is, my son," she would answer gravely, "since it is all that is left me, would you rob me of it? I brought you into the world, David, and the day and hour that you descend to menial labor you will send me out of it."

And so the boy plodded on, feeling almost at times a criminal, ashamed of the bread he ate and the clothes he wore.

Up to the present time, just as he had never consciously put his brain to any practical use, he had never turned a dollar. It was partly this that caused Page, with her desperate view of things, to be blinded to the real man. He knew full well that in her sight he was a being who trod the world apologetically while his brothers were fighting the good fight for their wives, their mothers, and sisters. She had said some stinging things to him, things that had brought the blood

to his dark, handsome face, but he never replied. He felt that she was right.

While in his presence, he fascinated her as he fascinated all sensitive women, by his melodious voice, a voice that penetrated the senses like a narcotic — a flow of rhythmic language, and a kind of poetic beauty that one associates with the ideal cavalier and that clung to the eyes, even against the will.

It was this cavalier beauty, together with his air of delicate distinction, that held his mother captive, so that rather than see those finely fashioned hands drive a nail, she would, in secret, have hired herself out to perform any service. Page fought his deference to that for which no credit was due him; his mother encouraged and feasted herself upon it. If Dave was conscious of it, it was in a bitter way as though he himself was a vanity of his mother's that he could not insult. He nevertheless appreciated his physical gifts and ability to charm, and he rejoiced in his character which he felt could not be tarnished. A vein of humor that brightened many a situation, especially for his mother, ran through him, and an abounding love for what was fine in people kept up his spirits. He was, in fact, much of a Virginia gentleman of the old school, facing life, the difficult problem of life, in which that school no longer actually counted.

He took his seat and began to study himself and his environment.

Page had once spoken of his home, in his presence, as a prison. Was it? He could not admit this and his eyes filled, out of very love of it. It was, he admitted, gloomy and ponderous, but it had ever been illumined by that peculiar passionate adoration that Southern families expend upon one another. Each

of the three beings of this household was, in the eyes of the other, perfection, three elect ones, whom fate had dealt unkindly with and who, in consequence, must be very tender to one another. His mother he regarded as a saint.

That Uncle Randolph was a grumbler no one attempted to deny; but his grumbling was impersonal and directed against the "Yankees" and conditions generally. It was a way of giving vent to arrested energies. His views were the views of the generation that had preceded him, and nothing could change these views and nothing could reconcile him to existing conditions. Everything was right before the war and everything was wrong since the war, and there the whole matter ended. Dave had imbibed these teachings from his infancy, and to-night in the face of Page's outburst he had no doubt that in many respects they were narrow.

He pondered thus a long while, seated in the low arm chair, with his dark head slightly lowered, his eyes bright with excitement, environed by the solemn impressive furniture, the gloomy wall papering, with fall leaves of pale gold and Lancelot riding away from Guinivere; rows upon rows of law-books imprisoned under glass doors in the tall mahogany book-cases, and the whole lit up half dismally by one lowered gas burner of the large crystal chandelier that always jingled like a faint orchestra to every footstep.

All these things penetrated him with a sense of fitness, and his views of what Page's life should be even apart from himself remained unchanged. If they walked the narrow road of conventionality, as Page had said, if the keynote of existence was, as she had also said, repression and the merging of the individual

into ideas, it was best for the community as a whole. He could see no flaw, even if the road was narrow, and all marched to the same step. It was a clean road, bounded by conventions that had for their foundation, first of all, man's protection of the fireside. His belief in woman as a wife and mother, finding her sole happiness in her husband and her children, could not be shaken.

Page was not the first wild colt broken to harness, and sometimes this was accomplished through gentleness.

He arose, put out the gas, and ascended the stairs.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MOTHER

NOT many nights passed without a little visit, short or long, as the case might be, to his mother's chamber before finally retiring for the night, so with no surprise in the smile that lit up her face as she saw him in the doorway, she greeted him.

David always felt upon entering his mother's room that he was entering a sanctuary; time and her own pure existence in it rendered it sacred to him. It had to-night its accustomed aspect of the hour, and, as was the case in the library, nothing in it during his lifetime had changed or, he felt, would ever change. The pieces of furniture were as fixed in their niche as the mantel-piece and windows in theirs, and, in David's eyes, had a personality equal to that of the members of the family.

The bed, a large teester one, was turned down for the night, and the threadbare Marseilles counterpane and large day pillows were in their accustomed place, where they were put to rest every night as regularly as the family went to bed. The thin worn blankets, yellow from age, with pale blue borders barely visible, were actually members of the family, and in his eyes, respected as such. They were growing old with their generation, getting thin, and giving out little heat, getting worthless, in fact, but they were kept sweet and clean just as some old, old ladies that David knew, and their place on the bed was just as assured as that of

the old ladies in their little rockers. Dave wondered once how he would feel if he should enter his mother's room at night and find a pair of new blankets on the bed. Certainly not comfortable; it would be as though they had joined the ranks of the modern vulgar and performed an unpardonable offense to the old. That Mrs. Lee covered herself in very cold weather with flannel skirts and woolen wrappers was an open secret never referred to. She always had on, at this hour, one of these woolen wrappers. Just as she arranged her hair always in the same fashion these wrappers were always cut by the same pattern. They were not pretty, but they were a part of her and nothing could actually mar her frozen beauty.

While not of an affectionate nature, she was splendidly endowed with the power of loving, and this passionate giving of herself to the few she selected to hold dear, illumined her being. There seemed to be a kind of resentment against an unjust fate pervading her soul, a resentment that manifested itself in strict obedience to it. An old ribbon, worn waist, or pair of worthless shoes, would have bought the services of the colored people, glad to work for such things, or a meal or two, but she never availed herself of such opportunities. She retained their old cook, a little grandson of the old woman helped her in the house, and with her own delicate hands, she did the rest. A stubborn life but a patient life and a holy life.

Downstairs in the gloomy old parlor, the window shutters of which were rarely opened, and where in winter a fire was rarely lit, there was a portrait of her in a black velvet bodice, with curls on one white shoulder and a tea rosebud over her ear above the curls.

This vision of his mother always mystified Dave.

There was a roguish smile on the pictured face such as he had never seen on the living face. He had heard that no one ever saw it from the day they brought his father home from the war, and laid him before her, dead. Before that, he was told, it had always been roguish, piquant, merry; that her eyes sparkled and that her laugh went with her like a bird's song. For his part, he had only seen her as a patient Madonna, a creature dead to all worldly thoughts, on fire with love for himself, who punctiliously performed duties for his sake.

She was seated to-night as usual beside a round mahogany center-table that held her Bible, a faded framed photograph of her dead husband, in his Confederate uniform, and a little daguerreotype of David taken in his seventh year.

Over at her back was the, apparently patient, old washstand that had been holding all these years, with great caution, her bridal china-set, of which not one piece had been broken. There had been times in David's life when he had trembled at the thought of knocking off a piece of that china, and even now he passed it in awe. Everything in the room was seriously respected by him, from the darns of the flowers on the lace curtains that hung majestically from the deep gilt cornice and had two heavy cords, once red but now a rusty brown, to the pin-cushion well fitted in a silver filigree frame. Sometimes Dave smiled at the profound respect with which he treated these things.

"I wonder, mother," he said, entering the room and taking his stand in front of her, "if there is in all the world a woman as lovely as you are this moment in this quaint old room of yours?"

"Or a woman who has such a handsome son?" she returned brightly.

He seated himself comfortably in a frayed arm-chair that was always placed for him.

"Am I so handsome?" he asked her, smiling.

"That is a silly question, David."

"To put to you, yes, Mother!"

"Well, my darling?"

"Why can't you make Page see me with your eyes?"

"Perhaps she does." Mrs. Lee's voice was cold.

Dave answered this a little irritably. "You know very well that she does not; that in her eyes I am not the most praiseworthy of mortals. Perhaps I am not, but I would like to have her blinded to all my defects, deceived as you are, just that she might love me one hour as you do!"

"You love her so, David?" she inquired sharply.

"I have always loved her, mother, you know that!"

There was a momentary silence, in which the heart of mother and son refused to respond, and then Dave repeated:

"I have always loved her, but to-night a change has come over me — I want her by my side — by your side; I want to bring her home."

"Why this change, David?" Her voice was still sharp.

"Because she needs my protection."

"Why? How do you know?"

"Because she wants to escape it."

There was a pause, during which Mrs. Lee stared at her son, and then he broke it rather vehemently.

"Besides, mother," he cried, "there has come over me all of a sudden to-night the realization that I am

no longer a boy, but a man, and when a man feels that, that he is a man, he wants the responsibilities of a man — he wants a wife!" He had flushed a little and spoke with embarrassment but firmly.

His mother paled, but she made no reply, and presently he continued: "You know what my life has been, mother! You know that I have lived not in accordance with my ideas, but in deference to yours and Uncle Ran's. Up to now, I have never allowed myself to be respectful to my own rights. My forces have all been husbanded, waiting for the opportunity that would satisfy both you and him. Your existence with its menial occupations and Uncle Ran's sacrifices in my behalf have held me, as it were, in your debt. Complete sacrifice of self seemed to me to be the price of my life. Naturally this has weighed upon me, but you must not feel that my life has been unhappy. Far from it. The world, the physical world apart from humanity and humanity's efforts in it, has always been to me, in spite of my dissatisfaction with myself, so emphatically comforting and uplifting, that, unless I fought it, I was often thrown into a kind of ecstasy against my will. When I went to college, temptations sprang up about me, temptations to drink and gamble, many kinds of temptations to which my friends carelessly surrendered themselves, but to which I was never tempted to yield. Gratifying these inclinations cost money, and how could I spend money on myself when you lived as you did and Uncle Ran as he did — for my sake. Sometimes looking back on those college days, I marvel at myself. All that other men have given vent to, I have never given vent to, and so stored up within me are all my virtues and vices. Tonight, I want to make my own acquaintance. I want

to confront everything good or bad in me and see how I can use it. A recognition of self has occurred that makes me eager about myself and the world and eager to take a part in it. I feel that my first step is to try to make Page my wife." A burning flush sprang into his face. "I saw Page to-night, mother — I want her here!"

"That should be very simple," answered the mother with a tinge of sarcasm.

"Not so simple as you imagine, mother!"

"She should consider it an honor to be your wife!" Mrs. Lee's cheeks flushed.

Dave leaned forward, took one of her hands and kissed it. "Your view, mother," he said absently. "If I ever win Page, it will not be until I have won honors for myself — I know that."

"Then she doesn't love you, David."

"I have never appeared worthy of her love. Perhaps I shouldn't feel to her as I do if she had been satisfied with the kind of man I have been up to the present time. Page is an idealist, and that sense in her must be appealed to. I have always felt myself so far removed from her ideal, that I have intruded upon her half apologetically. I have stifled my joy in her as I have stifled my joy in existence itself. I have never felt the right to it. Page's happiness," he went on, "lies in creating dreams. I have always known this and that her nature demands a certain kind of toleration, the toleration that the higher temperament always demands; toleration of an unreal existence surrounding the real existence and that is as necessary to her as Uncle Ran's tobacco is to him!"

"But that is absurd. Why should Page be different and have erratic ideas?"

"*Times* have changed, mother."

"Times never change for a lady, David!"

"Page doesn't think that way, mother, and to make clear to her that she is wrong is a difficult task and one that I want you to help me in. She wants to become an authoress, and she considers it perfectly proper to attempt in that way to make her own living. She is obsessed by that idea and seems possessed of a mental nausea of the poverty that she is surrounded by and that has become her portion. Here," Dave took in the room with his hand, "nothing offends, and so we cannot realize what she has suffered. These old things about us, that have always been about us, have become through age and association almost sacred; they are so much a part of you, your very spirit breathes so through them that," Dave smiled, "if an angelic image of you, a medallion, should one morning be engraved on every single thing in this house, it would not surprise me. But Page, poor little orphaned waif, knocked about from pillar to post, and finally landed in an attic room at Mr. Bartlett's! Can she, with her fine imagination, her sensitive nature, be blamed for wanting to fly away—even for wanting to steal into the victorious enemy's camp, if merely to behold its splendor?"

"You mean her preposterous talk of going to New York?" gasped Mrs. Lee.

"Yes."

"But, Dave, it isn't *proper* for Page to talk of going to New York."

"Of course not, mother, and that is what has aroused me to-night. I've got to prevent her from going. That's why I want to bring her here! The conditions of her life are enough to make her want to fly from

thence anywhere. Neither you nor I can deny, that except to the strongest of heart, the poverty and narrowness of our social life to-day is suffocation. Even though we are far better circumstanced than Page, think of the circumscribed conditions and monotony of your life, Uncle Ran's and my own!"

"David! You are echoing Page's sentiments."

"Perhaps. But I tell you this, mother: there isn't anything unusual that Page might want to do that I couldn't understand!"

"There is no doubt about your love for her, my son," she remarked coldly.

"Don't *you* love her, mother?"

The two pairs of dark velvety eyes so alike, yet in this moment so different, met and met fearlessly.

"I am fond of Page, David, very fond of her, and I can understand your infatuation for her. She is beautiful and very interesting, but she is *not*," and Mrs. Lee's voice rose, "the girl I would choose for your wife!"

"And whom would you choose, mother?"

"You wish me to answer frankly?"

"I do."

"Martha Morton," answered Mrs. Lee demurely and with grave dignity.

To her surprise, Dave burst into a hearty peal of laughter, and then leaning forward in his chair, he took her face in his hands and looked mischievously into her eyes. "Mother," he exclaimed, "you are jealous of Page! You want me to marry a girl who will look after my comfort, but whom you are quite sure I will never love!"

Tears gushed to Mrs. Lee's eyes and rolled in streams down her cheeks, and Dave, suddenly over-

powered by this widowed life that had centered itself upon him, sacrificed for him, worked for him, and upon whom he was inflicting a keen blow, dropped down in front of her and drew her into his arms passionately and tenderly.

For a moment she clung to him convulsively, and then lifted her head and faced him. "David," she cried, "this has been the hour of my life that I have dreaded and put off; the hour of your serious confession of love, but it has come, and I am glad it is over! And —" she hesitated, but for an instant only, "I find that I am ready for it! I want the last drop of happiness that a man can know to overflow your cup! If it is Page, I want you to marry Page!"

"Of course you do, darling mother!" Dave cried, clasping her again in his arms, and then he kissed her gently good-night and left her.

When he reached his room, he struck a match and, lighting the gas of the little burner at the end of the mantel-piece, he glanced at himself in the mirror. Suddenly he started. It was as though, since he last saw himself, he had been born again. He leaned forward and looked keenly at his illumined, eager face. Then instinctively lowering the gas, he walked to the window and, raising the shade, looked out on the moonlight night.

How peaceful the old city was with its inhabitants asleep. Somehow it comforted him to feel that they were asleep, that for the hour tired hearts were resting, tired brains unconscious.

And how dear they all seemed to him, living alike, as Page had declared, adherers to old laws and old customs for which any one of them would be ready to lay down life.

Finally he turned into the room, raised the light again, and began to undress. As he did so the words of his mother concerning Martha Morton suggested an idea to him that caused him a little flutter about the heart. He would use Martha Morton as a means of stimulating Page's jealousy. It was a trick but a harmless one, provided Martha was made acquainted with his purpose. The following evening he called on Martha.

CHAPTER IX

THE GRIM VISITOR

THE morning after Page's conversation with Dave, Sadie May's continued crying of late was explained. The child was ill. The night before, Mrs. Bartlett said she went to bed with fever, and the doctor had pronounced it scarlet fever.

All the children, the four boys, by the advice of the doctor, had been sent away to Mrs. Bartlett's sister. They were marched off like little soldiers, escorted by a next door neighbor who had been all the morning scrubbing and dressing them. Each had on his Sunday suit, a big flaring tie and a ruffled collar. They were as stiff, in their Sunday clothes and new shoes, as hardy warriors indeed and looked to Page most pitiful. Perhaps, she thought, they too were marching to death! She hoped they hadn't caught it, and oh, she prayed that Sadie May wouldn't die. How could Mrs. Bartlett stand it!

The house was painfully still, and as was the fashion with this class of people, all the blinds in the front were closed. A request came to her to close hers. She did so and had barely a crack to see through as she sat writing. It was bad enough for her before, but now with this impending calamity, it was unbearable. She put aside her writing and went down to see the child. Poor little Sadie May was scarcely recognizable; her face was red and swollen but she had on her best gown with lace on it and her mother called her attention to it,

and brought out her new hat covered with daisies, which she said, wringing her hands, she knew Sadie May would never wear again.

Her grief was terrible to witness, and Page standing there in the little darkened room saw all this woman's hopes in life slipping away with this child, whom she recognized as desperately ill. Mrs. Bartlett turned excitedly to Page after the little hat had been put away, and told her that not one Sunday had passed over Sadie May's head when she had not been dressed fit for a princess to see. Page knew she believed it.

The next day Sadie May grew worse and the doctor gave no hope. Page was up nearly all night and had been in the room most of the day. There had been a continuous stream of visitors and Page marveled at this strange world that had existed in Richmond unknown to her — people entirely out of her set, out of any set, just people who seemed to spring up out of the earth with hearts and tears and kindness. Mrs. Bartlett was beside herself with grief. She declared over and over that God had punished her for having loved the child too much and her promises to the Almighty provided Sadie May was spared to her were harrowing.

Page, always analytical, marveled also at the anguish a human heart could experience over an object so unimportant as little Sadie May had always seemed to her. The child's father looked like a man suddenly struck dumb. He just sat and stared at his wife's ravings. In the night a terrible shriek reached Page and she knew that Sadie May must be dead. She lay awake a greater part of the night thinking until it seemed to her finally that the world itself was but God's

battlefield and that unseen soldiers slew, indiscriminately, even the little children.

The following day poor Sadie May was laid out in a small white coffin in the parlor. The coffin was an expensive one. She had on her white dress trimmed in lace and pink ribbons. They put a wreath of flowers on her head and three lilies in her hands. Sadie May was three the day she died. Upstairs her mother was sitting with one of Sadie May's little shoes in her hand. She wasn't crying; they couldn't make her cry. Her husband carried the shoe an hour before and put it in her hands thinking it would make her cry, but it didn't. It was as though she had forgotten Sadie May.

Sadie May's death made such an impression on Page, and the house after the funeral seemed so desolate that she decided to spend a few days at her Cousin Edmund's, so she packed an old carpet bag and went.

CHAPTER X

THE MASTER IN THE HOUSE

SHE found them in the midst of preparations, such as they were with their meager means, for Emily's marriage. Emily was the oldest of the children, eight in number, and had recently finished her eighteenth year.

Page thought Emily looked pale and her heart sank as she looked into the sad, startled eyes. It was very unnatural for Emily to look pale. She had always been a plump girl, with cheeks like roses. She was now like a pallid camelia.

The third morning after her arrival, entering her Cousin Mary's room suddenly, she discovered her trying to check her tears and embroider Emily's little wedding petticoat at the same time.

"Cousin Mary," she asked, drawing a chair beside her, "why do you allow Emily to marry Robert Hughes when you know she doesn't love him and that it is breaking her heart?"

"It is breaking my heart too, Page," answered the mother quickly.

"Then why do you permit it?"

"It's her father, my dear."

"But it isn't right! Emily had better try to do something to support herself!"

Cousin Mary threw up her hands. "Support herself! Why, Page, Mr. Fairfax says he would rather see her begging than working. He thinks the only re-

spectable thing for a poor girl to do is to marry. Marriage he declares under *any* circumstances is better for a girl than work; he thinks it *disgraceful* for a woman to make her own living. He is shocked at you, my dear, for entertaining the very thought of such a thing! He says never mind who the man is, whether he is good or bad, if he is the only one, marry. Marriage is respectable and nothing else is, nothing whatsoever, for a woman!"

"But Cousin Mary, this is terrible; I would oppose him in such notions!"

Mrs. Fairfax's face took on a look of terror. "Oppose your Cousin Edmund, Page! Why, my dear, I would as soon think of opposing God! I've never done such a thing in my life."

"And, so," said Page, a little white in the face, "you're going to stand by and let Emily be sacrificed?"

"My child, I can't help myself."

"I think it's barbarous!" exclaimed Page.

"A man must be the ruler in his house," said Cousin Mary dismally as she took up Emily's little petticoat.

"Cousin Mary," said Page, "there are some ideas in Virginia that are abhorrent to me. Aren't we ever going to change at all?"

"To think of such a thing, Page, is almost sacrilegious."

Cousin Mary forced her gentle face into sternness. "I think it's *right* for a woman to abide by her husband, no matter what his views are," she said coldly. "I was raised that way. Whatever Mr. Fairfax does is right," and Mrs. Fairfax's lips closed firmly.

"If hearts are broken?" demanded Page hotly.

"My child, the wind is tempered to the shorn

lamb and Emily can always go to God for comfort!" Page looked at the gentle face and tears filled her eyes. At this moment her Cousin Mary was to her like a dumb driven animal questioning nothing.

"Poor little thing," she said, the tears overflowing, "and she has loved Fielding Peyton all her life."

"Yes," said Cousin Mary drearily, "I know she has."

"Is it true Cousin Edmund denied Fielding the house?"

"It is, Page, and his mother wrote Mr. Fairfax a letter thanking him. She said that with herself on his hands and his aunt and five sisters, Fielding couldn't afford a wife. There is no hope for them, poor children, and they know it. Ah! If Fielding were only different; but what is he? A dreamer. What has he to offer Emily? A tall graceful form, a pair of dark, sorrowful, hopeless eyes, and some pieces of poetry that he composes to her."

"And a heart so full of love, it would make her feel a queen!" exclaimed Page. "Fielding may be a dreamer, but he works very hard too! He follows the plow all day long in the broiling sun, he hauls the wood and ice in the winter and cuts the wood, ah! What doesn't he do, poor fellow! Last summer I was visiting there; he came out of that scorching sun to where I was, under a tree, and, leaning on the fence, talked to me. I have never gotten over it. Oh! I wish he had not talked to me. I can't get it out of my head. He told me what he felt capable of and what he had to do, and that he knew Emily was lost to him. The day, Cousin Mary, even in the shade of the tree, was hot. I looked on the scorching field and at the old mule that was hitched to the plow, and I told him I didn't see how

he could stand it. His only answer was to point to the house where all those eight women were."

"Mother," at this moment cried one of the children, putting his head in the door, "the sugar's here for the candy pulling."

"Go and help them fix things, will you, Page? I forgot to tell you that Emily is having a little party to-night to say good-by to her friends. She wanted to have something and a sugar stew was the cheapest. If David Lee comes be nice to him, my dear. Dave can support you; there is no reason why *you* two should not marry."

Page flushed. "Cousin Mary, why does everyone say that to me?" she asked impatiently. "Why is everyone trying to force me to marry Dave?"

"Because, my dear, David loves you and because he is the most promising young man in Richmond. Mr. Fairfax says so."

CHAPTER XI

CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

THE day was spent in arranging for the party. Once, while Page and Emily were piling the apples in the silver baskets, Emily turned impulsively, clasped Page in her arms, and burst into tears.

"Page," she cried, "darling Cousin Page; they are forcing me into it, and I wish I were dead!"

"Then why *do* you, Emily?"

"What can I do?" Emily cried. "And I want to — I want to! Everybody will be comfortable, father can have what he wants on the table, you know how hard it is for him to do without things, and I *do* want to, I could die for father and mother and the boys, but oh! why can't it be a quick death; why can't I be shot for them as our soldiers were for us; why can't I be burned at the stake — that would be quickly over; but oh! my God, Page, this living death!"

"Do you hate him so, Emily?"

"No, no, I don't hate him; he is so good, so kind, such a splendid man! I don't hate him, but when I think of his touch,— that he can lay his hands on my shoulders — the other day he did and for the first time he asked me to let him kiss me, and I shrieked and ran out of the room. Poor fellow. Poor fellow!"

She buried her face in her hands and stood sobbing. And between her sobs Page heard her murmuring, "Fieldy, Fieldy! Oh, Fieldy, my love!"

At night quite a gay party were assembled, gay be-

cause they were young. They put the chairs and tables aside and danced, while Cousin Mary played on the old piano, waltzes and polkas that she had learned when a girl.

Dave arrived late, and, to Page's astonishment and quick indignation, he was escorting Martha Morton.

Martha looked quite pretty, unusually so, in a pink tarletan with a wreath of natural pinks on her dark hair and returned Page's greeting in an off-hand, superior manner. Someone had told Page that Dave had been seeing a good deal of Martha lately, that the Sunday before he had walked home from church with her and that Mrs. Lee had invited her to tea several times. Certainly this evening Dave seemed quite engrossed with Martha and once when he stood at the foot of the stairs talking to her in almost a tender manner, Page, who happened to be descending, paused and gazed at him. She noted with sudden vision his clear, rich complexion, his flashing eyes, the live, glistening hair, the sensitive temples, the scarlet, determined mouth and the strong white teeth. Dave had always possessed these physical advantages, but it seemed to her that added to them was a certain intense vitality, a new strength and the manner and bearing of a victor. She had noticed also that his arrival with Martha had caused quite a stir among the guests and had overheard comments concerning his attentions to her. Everyone had been surprised to see him escorting Martha and furtive glances had been directed to Page that irritated her.

Once, rather late in the evening, when she stepped out on the porch, he followed her. While he did not approach her and only stood on the other side of the porch looking out, a feeling of rest came over her.

She always had that languorous, restful feeling when Dave was near, and suddenly it seemed to her that it would be maddeningly sweet to live all her life in that graceful, magnetic presence. That Dave could ever think of another girl as his wife had never before occurred to her. She was so used to his devotion, and to having his name coupled with hers that this introduction of Martha between them was received as an affront.

She took a step in advance to speak to him, to take her place by his side and assume her right to question him concerning his pronounced attentions to Martha, but there came over her the feeling that if she made such an advance to him, he would demand seriousness of her and a decision as to their future. Was she prepared to face this? Suddenly, as something entirely apart from Dave, the old house, where she would have to live, came up. She saw the walls of the different rooms with their gloomy, faded paper, these walls that closed in Dave, Uncle Randolph chewing tobacco and reading law, and Mrs. Lee always stoically performing her duties. It repelled her and sent a little chill down her spine. Even the prayer books she recalled were always on the same table just where they had been all her life and Mrs. Lee continued to read a chapter in the Bible every morning after breakfast and have family prayers. Page remembered how nervous those prayers used to make her during her visits there when a child, especially the days when the Litany was said. Dave, yes, but his environment and all that went with Dave! She was again attacked by madness for freedom and the opportunity to revel in herself.

Finally Dave turned and walked over to her, and, as he did so, Emily rushed out breathless. Her face was

white with terror and lit up with a frantic passion.

"Page," she cried, catching her hand in a sharp clasp, "stand guard for me — watch for me!"

"Emily, what is it — what are you going to do?"

The girl gave a startled look first at Dave, then at her, and lowered her voice to a whisper. "Fielding is at the gate. He has been walking up and down the sidewalk for an hour. I am going out to him — going to speak to him — I must — I'm going to say good-by — watch for me — watch father!"

Before Page could speak the little white-robed figure had broken away and was flying like lightning down the steps, and through the short path. A moment later they heard her broken, smothered sobs and knew that her lover had her on his breast.

"Poor little thing," said Dave in a broken voice.

"It's a shame," Page cried, "and I hate Cousin Edmund for it. They are laying her upon the altar as a living sacrifice. And all over Virginia these tragedies are going on!"

"They are the result of war," said Dave absently and sadly.

"And of women surrendering too easily — Emily ought to run away with Fielding."

"You wouldn't run away with me," said Dave fiercely as he laid a hand on her shoulder.

"No," answered Page who was in an overwrought condition, first through her jealousy and then through Emily, "but I suppose Martha Morton would!"

"Do you?" asked Dave, feigning eagerness.

"Do *you*?" she flashed.

Dave had seen his advantage and made no reply, fastening upon her brain a silence fraught with meaning.

They remained thus quite a while until Emily appeared at the foot of the steps like a corpse. Seeing that she was scarcely able to mount the steps, and was holding out her hands for help, Page ran down to her assistance.

CHAPTER XII

NEGRO HEROISM

THE next morning Page felt so oppressed that she almost wished she could return home before breakfast. She dressed herself quietly, however, and descended to the dining-room.

The family was already assembled at the table and the sight of Cousin Edmund's round back, a little bent, and his bald head, that faced her, as she entered the door, overcame her, she knew not why, with tenderness. She went up as usual and kissed him before taking her seat. She glanced at her Cousin Mary, who looked like a statue in its accustomed niche, and saw the tremulousness of the thin fingers as they passed her cup to her. Page wanted to grasp the hand and cover it with tears and kisses, but felt that she must restrain herself.

Emily was seated at her left and her eyes had grown tragic. Looking into them Page could read in their startled depths that, come what would, this child would love, honor, and obey her parents. She felt her knees tremble and wanted to get down on them before this broken-hearted young creature, this being obeying blindly what she had been taught was right, who would die kissing the hand that had stabbed her, and was leading her into humiliation, because that hand was her father's. The pathos of it appalled Page and she had a stronger feeling than ever that there were things that must pass away.

After breakfast she packed her old carpet bag and left.

When she reached the street, she breathed freer. The glory of the day struck her full in the face, and she took in great breaths of air like a liberated prisoner. She realized that for days she had been under the pressure of emotions that were stifling her as they were stifling the entire family — her Cousin Edmund included. As he rose before her, growing old under the burdens that had been bearing him down for twenty years, and that he was about to sacrifice his child to be relieved of, her throat swelled, a lump rose in it, and tears gushed to her eyes.

She remembered him, and must ever remember him, as he was when she was a little girl, merry, genial, and jovial. She remembered how the children always ran to meet him, how he tossed the little ones in the air or let them "ride horse," on his foot in their little nightgowns before they went to bed. And how charmingly he entertained at his table, and ah! yes, how he danced at the parties, bowing so graciously to the ladies, and even cutting the "pigeon wing" when it came his time to "forward two"—and, now! Why Cousin Edmund was almost an old man; she recognized it for the first time that morning when she entered the dining-room and was so overcome with tenderness at the sight of his bowed shoulders and bald head.

Such a sharp pain clutched at her heart that involuntarily she put her hand over it. She felt the desire to strike a terrific blow at something that would save things, her Cousin Edmund included, and suddenly she felt doubly inspired to save herself. She felt that to stand by the old, the rotting, the hopeless,

the finished, was madness that amounted to crime. Her pace was rapid, her breath came quickly, and her whole body felt as though she were being stung by innumerable insects that she could not fight off.

She was entering the front door, when Mrs. Bartlett ran out to meet her.

"Miss Page," she whispered, "Aunt Martha is up in your room, and I think she has been drinking."

Page nodded a comprehensive reply and mounted the stairs quickly. As she entered the door the tall, gaunt form of an old negress was outlined against the black mantel-piece. When she saw Page, her face lit up for a moment, and then her strident voice rang out:

"Lord, Lord! Miss Page, what do you think done happen? Dey done put Sam in de prison again — oh! My Gaud, honey! What I guine to do?"

It was plain to see that Mrs. Bartlett was right — Aunt Martha had been drinking. She was a tall, aristocratic old lady, with ginger-bread skin, who used to be seamstress and general directress in Uncle Randolph's household during his mother's lifetime.

She was possessed of high character and integrity, and could be trusted with anything, including the care of your soul, except the whisky bottle. It seemed that she always had the failing, but, as it never interfered with her work or deportment, it was overlooked. Uncle Randolph used to tell his mother to look out, that Martha was on her "high horse," but Mrs. Harrison never admitted it because life without Martha as a kind of vice-president in the establishment; to be on hand for consultation for every event, from the giving of a ball to the whipping of the children — few children escaped whipping in Mrs. Harrison's day —

would have been impossible to her, or she thought so.

Poor old creature, times had changed for her and her little indulgences had become more frequent. She was not the only one who had succumbed to the habit in the last fifteen years. Life with her was hard, hard indeed, and God had seen fit to curse her with a bad son.

This Sam, almost a giant in stature and black as the ace of spades, had become a petty thief, and his poor old mother's honest heart was bursting with shame. There was a dusky red in her brown cheeks not produced by the whisky alone. Of late years, Mrs. Lee had not felt that she could afford a seamstress, and Aunt Martha had been living with her son and going out to do sewing by the day.

"Oh, not the penitentiary again, Aunt Martha?" Page exclaimed.

"Yes, honey, and he ain't been out six months. And all de gemmens what hep me ter git his pardon, how I guine face 'em?"

"Oh, well, you needn't, Aunt Martha; I'd just stay away."

"An' who guine to 'sport me?" The old face paled. "Who guine gib me my bread and meat and keep the roof over me? Who?"

Page couldn't answer.

"I too ole to work, my eye-sight done give out, so I kyarnt see ter do fine sewing, and besides, nobody got fine sewing. 'Tain't nobody got fine sewing 'cepen de pore white trash, en Gaud knows I ain guine work fur dem — Gaud knows I ain't!"

And Aunt Martha, who had dropped into a chair, rose excitedly to her feet. Her form towered up straight as an arrow, she was neat and clean from the

head-handkerchief to the white apron that covered her faded calico dress and reached nearly to her feet. She was a representative of the respectable colored people, who, under slavery, felt themselves superior to the ordinary whites. The poorhouse, yes, she could see visions of it, but she could no more, at this day, no matter what she might have come to, work for the "poor white trash" than she could have, Elijah-like, flown to heaven. Her pride had been dealt a severe blow; her child, the child of her body, her own son, a great wicked Hercules, in whom her pride centered, had disgraced her. She could not mend matters by thus falling herself.

Her suffering as she stood there facing Page in her little room, was acute; this big creature that she had borne was a thief, but he was good to her; except when he was serving his terms in the penitentiary, she had never known actual want. And she loved him, this big, burly Sam, this hard-working thief — she loved him! Page did a very weak thing. She always did weak things when people were suffering. She put her hand in her little purse and took out a quarter. "Here, Aunt Martha, go get yourself a little whisky, you're so unstrung," she said.

However, when she saw the eager light that flamed up in the old eyes, the light of the lover of drink, who sees it within grasp, she felt alarmed. She always felt alarmed when she knew that what she deliberately did was wrong, and she saw a glimmer of the result.

"Lord, chile, you ain't got no money to gib me," Aunt Martha said with a faint smile as she took the quarter.

Relieved though, her whole being had relaxed, and she sat down prepared to tell her story. She came

for that quarter, and she came for it to get whisky. She had done it before, and Page's aunt had scolded her many times for giving it to her.

As Page sat and looked at her she tried to analyze the harm. She couldn't see much. Here was a poor soul, a victim like herself of a cruel, bitter fate, possibly uncertain of the roof over her head, certainly with scant food and a pride inculcated in her by circumstances for which she was in no way responsible, that prevented her from bettering herself and getting along. Suppose she did try to forget things!

"Lord, honey, what do you think your ma and gram'ma would say if she knew what we done come to?" she said, looking at Page wistfully.

"I don't know, Aunt Martha, I often wonder," said Page.

"It's many a night I lays thar in my hard bed and looks out at de stars and thanks Gaud Mars Ran's father and mother, my old marster and mistiss, is safe behind'm on Jesus' breast — many er night! What we do, Miss Page, if it want for de Lord Jesus Christ? What I do ter-day with Sam out dar," her voice broke, "in that awful den, if I didn't know Jesus was standing by my side? He right here, Miss Page; his hand is raised over my head, en I can hear him saying, 'Martha, de Lord is wid you, abide in de Lord.'" She dropped down in her seat again and Page went up and put her hand on her shoulder.

"How else," she continued, looking at Page, her old dim eyes filled with tears, "how else could I stand my chile being dar, Miss Page?"

She buried her face in her hands and wept convulsively for a few moments, and then drying her tears in a corner of her apron, she went on excitedly, "But

Jesus wid us! He wid *him*, en He guine wash him white as snow. Honey, does you pray," she asked suddenly, "does you say your prayers regular? Does you say, 'Now I lay me,' and 'Our Father who art in Heaven?' "

"Oh, yes, Aunt Martha!"

"Dat right, chile."

"What is it," Page asked timidly, after a long pause, "that Sam has done this time?"

"Jess a little pig iron, honey. He took it from where dem Yankees building dat new foundry en sold it for fifty cents, en he bought some meal, en bacon, en a little sugar and coffee, en fetched em home to me. Dey dar now — I kyarn't eat'm. I kyarn't touch'm! What you reckon made him steal dem little things, Miss Page? Sam ain't er bad man!"

"Oh! Aunt Martha," answered Page desperately, "I don't know. But you wait here, you look so tired. I'm going down and get Mrs. Bartlett to cook something for you; you must have something to eat before you go home."

"Naw, naw, 'tain't no use putting her to all dat trouble. I'll be goin' now." She arose and put on a faded but spotlessly clean sun-bonnet, made in the old style with pasteboard slats in it. Page knew she wanted to go for the whisky, but she didn't care — not in the least. She hoped she would get it quickly, if only it would ease the sad pain in her heart. How *could* she care? She did another weak thing. She said, "Aunt Martha, I would eat those things out there at your room. It can't hurt anybody; it can't hurt Sam; he's paid for his sin; and it can't hurt God."

"It ken hurt *me*, honey," said this simple courageous soul. Page rebuked — said good-by to her; told

her to come again, and listened to her footsteps as she descended the stairs, thinking in her heart that she, too, this poor old colored woman, was one of the South's blighted flowers. She thought a long while of all the sorrow and misery that seemed to be upon her people, white and black, and in this moment each seemed equally dear to her.

Finally she heard steps on the stairs. Fixing her eyes upon the doorway, she was a moment later confronted by Cousin Betty.

"My gracious!" said that energetic lady, entering a little flushed and excited, "I've been trying to get here the entire morning. Everybody I met stopped me, and I stopped myself to go by and speak to poor Harriet Burwell. Did you know they were being sold out?"

"No!" gasped Page.

"Yes," said Cousin Betty, laying a roll of music and a small reticule on the bed and taking Page's little rocker, "and it all comes of Harriet being what she has always been, a silly woman!"

"But so dainty and sweet," answered Page.

"Dainty and sweet," replied Cousin Betty, "we can't afford to be dainty and sweet nowadays, and Harriet hasn't had the courage to give up living extravagantly just as she did before the war. I have been seeing the end for three years. Why, they have entertained more people there in a year than Mrs. Stebbins has at her boarding-house!"

"I know it," Page replied. "I never have been there that I didn't find a house full!"

"And what has it come to?" demanded Cousin Betty, "open house, elaborate table, and supporting two or three families of negroes!"

"Poor little Mrs. Burwell!" exclaimed Page. "But who isn't in trouble? Aunt Martha Washington has just been to see me. Sam's been stealing again!"

"You don't say! I do pity her and I certainly do pity poor Harriet, but I have never had any toleration of her extravagance. The idea of saying that it would kill her to ever put on anything but silk stockings and satin slippers! Haven't you heard her say that?"

"Yes, I have," Page admitted, smiling.

"Well," said Cousin Betty, "the end has come. Every blessed thing on earth they had, including her bridal chamber set, has gone to the auction. I'll never forget her standing on that porch in a pair of those self-same satin slippers, with a japonica in her hair, watching each piece put in the wagon. What on earth the poor child is going to do without a home to be at the head of, I don't know. But it's a good thing. Why, those poor people have been eaten out of house and home, and nothing could end it but not having a roof. Harriet can't help inviting people. They're going to the Exchange Hotel, you know! What do you suppose she did as I was leaving?"

"What?" asked Page.

"Invited me to come to tea this evening!" Cousin Betty laughed.

"I hope you are not going," exclaimed Page.

"Of course, I'm going," laughed Cousin Betty, "I haven't had supper in a hotel since I was at the White Sulphur Springs, heaven knows how many years ago. How is Mrs. Bartlett standing Sadie May's death?"

"Very poorly," answered Page, suddenly grave, "she seems even more depressed as the days go by."

"Well, she is a good little soul, and I am very sorry for her, but good people are often a little trying, too,"

Cousin Betty went on. "Now she ought to cheer up and not always be making that poor husband, whom she keeps right under her thumb, feel like he was at his own funeral. I'm going to tell her so. Why, I met the poor man on the street and he looks worn out; she's wearing him to a frazzle. Sadie May, and Heaven knows how she ever felt as she did about the poor little thing, is dead, and not worth worrying the poor father to death about. I tell you, Page, the longer I live, the more I wonder at women, and especially at married women. It's nothing nowadays but bickering and nagging. I suppose it isn't their fault, but the way things are — what everybody has come to. Before the war, I never heard a word between a man and his wife. It was all a bed of roses. It's all a bed of thorns now, my dear, and no wonder the poor creatures cry out and fret. I've got two more music lessons to give to-day," she went on; "think of it, sitting there a whole hour with children that have about as much talent for music as door knobs. I'd like to crack their skulls," she laughed.

"And you'll just be patient with them!" Page exclaimed. "Do you think *I* could tramp about as you do giving music lessons, and always being bright and kind and tolerant? I just couldn't — the tide goes with you, it goes against me."

"The tide doesn't go with me, my dear, I follow the tide," she replied. "Now, for example, the other night at old Colonel Thompson's, I was singing for them. As usual, Cousin Amanda would have the 'Irish Emigrant's Lament,' and so of course, while I am tired to death of the old thing, I sang it. I always do my best for Cousin Amanda, dear old soul; a better woman never lived on earth, and when I came

to the 'oo! oh! ooh! oooh!' I put in it as much pathos as I could. Well, somehow it struck everybody present, except Cousin Amanda, as funny. Perhaps it was, all that wailing, and the entire company was simply, in spite of Cousin Amanda shaking her head at everybody in turn, exploding behind their hands with laughter — one of the children was rolling on the floor. Now you don't suppose I got mad; not a bit of it! I turned it into the 'Wooden Leg' and let them laugh all they could when 'tra-ra-ra' came. That's the way, Page, my dear, we've got to do, turn with the tide. There are not many tragedies except war and disgrace that you can't turn into comedies, and since we have a store of tragedies on hand and very few comedies, we've got to make a few. It keeps people up."

"Cousin Betty, you are so brave," exclaimed Page. "Did you ever hurt anyone's feelings in your life?"

"I don't know, my child, I hope not. I don't deserve any credit for it, though, because apart from inflicting pain, it never seemed sensible. We've got to be sensible, my dear; we can't afford to be anything else, and especially these times. If a person has three faults and one good point, I always like to harp on the good point; it has served me many a little turn. Now to-day I'm going to harp on Mrs. Bartlett's cooking. To tell the truth, I like her hot biscuits. I'm going down and sing the 'Irish Mother's Lament' for her, and when she gets through her tears and has a good laugh, she will make some, and you must come down. I've got a little tea in here," touching her reticule, "Mr. Christian gave me to try, and this is as good a place as any to try it. These poor whites can cook!" she concluded with a wink.

She left, and Page sat thinking of her, wonderful woman, wonderful type of womanhood, true as steel, generous, warm-hearted, and loving, but shrewd and smart, with a merry and lofty contempt for the world. Presently her voice reached her wailing forth the "Irish Mother's Lament," as did also the sobs of Mrs. Bartlett, who was sitting outside the little parlor door on the steps. Mrs. Bartlett had said to her not less than a dozen times during the past week, if only she could have a good cry! Well, she was having it and Sadie May, poor little Sadie May, was none the worse for it if it was a relief, and they were going to have those fine, big, fat biscuits, that Mrs. Bartlett made to perfection — buttermilk biscuits! — she could almost smell them cooking.

She got up, walked over to the window and looked out, and to her delight she saw her Aunt Constance approaching.

Page was glad of this because she could induce her to go down and partake of Mrs. Bartlett's biscuits. It would require inducing, for her Aunt Constance couldn't understand how Cousin Betty could affiliate with people of Mrs. Bartlett's kind; but wherever Cousin Betty was everything became agreeable, and so, with some demurring, she finally agreed.

When the lunch was over, and they had returned to Page's room, Cousin Betty broached the subject of the trip which was hailed by Page with delight.

Before they separated, it was arranged that they take the boat on the following Wednesday. Cousin Betty whispered to Aunt Constance that she had seen Dave the evening before.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HISTORIC JAMES

THE boat they had to take to reach the old James River plantation of Fielding Peyton left at five o'clock in the morning, so at four they were up, three sleepy females dressing by the gaslight. Page was thinking that if she lived to be a thousand years old, she would always be able to recall vividly how she felt on those mornings when she had to get up to take that early boat, and the visions of the people rushing to catch it.

Nobody in Richmond at that time went to train or boat except in a hack. They wouldn't have felt otherwise that they were going on a trip, and certainly they would have felt embarrassed if a friend had caught them arriving on foot. Except at a funeral, it was the only time many of them ever got the chance to ride, and Page had known several ladies who had never gotten over being deprived of their carriages, who looked forward to these trips to the boat or grave on account of the hack rides. There wasn't imaginable, anything much more delightful than these big, roomy old hacks, with two dear old horses, that just as surely had interesting histories as the old darkey who drove them.

There were two occasions when these old darkeys whipped up their horses and gave people a good ride — when they were bringing them from a funeral or carrying them to a boat. Somehow for the latter event everybody was always a bit late, or thought

they were, and quite an excitement ensued. The old driver snapped his whip and talked to his horses down the last hill; returning drivers shook their heads and called out, "You never will kotch it," and at times the excitement grew quite intense. "Oh! Do hurry!" was cried out to the driver over and over to get in return, "I been kotchin' dat boat for twenty years, en I ain never miss it!" or some such expression as they went flying down the rocky hills, up others, and then down again with the fresh morning air in their nostrils, the rising sun in a pink hazy sky in their eyes, and vehicles passing or dropping behind. Once at the wharf they knew a dozen people who had all, like themselves, been rushing, and handshaking, and laughter followed as they marched aboard. Each one asked where he or she was going, and the cabin maid spoke to everybody and told the James River news.

It was arranged that Cousin Betty should engage the hack and "go by" for the other two.

Page was just burning her mouth with the coffee that Mrs. Bartlett *would* get up and make for her, when the rattle of wheels, and Cousin Betty's voice calling "Page! Page!" were heard. She put her head out of the window and called back brightly, "I am coming," and as she did so there was impressed on her mind, for life, the old hack all thrown open, Martin upon the box, and inside the two maiden ladies so different and yet in many respects alike. Two sweet flowers, sacred flowers, that bloomed in gorgeous gardens before the war, just as poor old Aunt Martha had, two flowers unequal to all the hardships they were bearing, ah, how unequal, but courageous and brave, and when it was possible, merry. She ran hurriedly down and kissed them both, called out "how-de do" to Uncle

Martin, whom she had known ever since she was born, and off they started.

"Now, Martin," called Cousin Betty, "whip up those old rattle bones of yours!"

"Dese here good horses, Miss Betty," he returned, "dey ain't no rattle bones."

"Well, we'll know what kind of horses you have if you catch that boat!" cried Cousin Betty with a joyous laugh.

"You ain't got to stop nowhar else, is you?" asked Martin over his shoulders.

"No, Miss Page was the last!"

"Well, den, dat boat good as kotched."

They dropped into other topics, and how they enjoyed that drive and the racing at the end, the arriving and the meetings, and the starting and, last but not least, the boat breakfast. Mrs. Bartlett had fixed up a basket for Page and her aunt had her beaten biscuits with thin slices of ham that somebody had fixed for her, but Cousin Betty declared she intended, if it took her last cent, to have them all eat at the table with the Captain. They did, and the joking and bursts of laughter between her and the Captain entertained and enlivened the entire dining-room. When they finished the merry breakfast and left to go on deck, the sweetest pink color had come into Aunt Constance's cheeks, and Page put her arm about her, as they went up the steps, and squeezed her.

The trip down the James River is famous for its beauty. It is justly so and more — it is uniquely interesting. At every landing there are people who know each other and call from wharf to boat, some running aboard for a chat while the boat unloads her merchandise and, when she blows her whistle and

starts on her way, there is waving and kissing of hands.

The stopping of the boats at the landings was the great event of the day to the country people. Oh, how poor and almost ragged the men looked in this year of 1886, standing there with sunburned, patrician faces and oftentimes hopeless expressions. Many wore worn shoes, many had on trousers that the rain had shrunk up or coats that the sun had changed the color of. But they lifted their hats, oftentimes, such hats! — like true cavaliers — and their voices had the true ring. No one was judged by his clothes. It didn't make the least difference in this blighted kingdom, where every man was a brother! The girls all looked sweet in their lawns and percales and calicos, and if a shoe was much worn, there was a ribbon around the waist and a smile on a beautiful mouth.

They landed at the wharf at one o'clock, and there was the old carriage, they knew so well, to meet them. This old carriage had been in the family since long before the war, and grand, for the time being, was the one who rode in it, at any rate one felt that way.

It did not seem to Page as she stepped into it that there ever had been a time when this carriage had not been, or that there ever could be a time when it would not be. It was as much a part of the world to her as the road it traveled.

Large and imposing it stood and also condescending and a criticism would no more be passed upon it than upon some old and honored member of the family. The seats were covered in pearl colored broadcloth, and the back and sides were upholstered in white damask satin. Black mohair issued from the seats and the white satin hung in strips, but the old windows were intact and could still be let up or down. The

top, also upholstered in white damask, was in a pretty good state of preservation, even to the broadcloth buttons, and maintained its dignity. It did one good to look up at it from the raggedness once in a while.

Hitched to this imposing vehicle was an old bay horse and a mule. How the harness held together was a mystery, but much of it was explained by ropes that could be observed here and there, and one of the reins was a rope. It is quite safe to say that no prouder driver than Alex Black ever stood beside a team. Alex was dressed for the occasion. Alex always dressed up, when he drove the carriage, in a pair of very light trousers belonging to someone generations ago, an old swallow-tailed coat and a white beaver.

They all shook hands with Alex, who said, "Sarvant, Mistiss," to each one of them, and grinned delightedly. They learned from him, as they started off, that Mr. Fielding wasn't so well, "been having chills," Miss Phoebe "right poo'ly," but all the rest were "right sprightly."

"Your roads haven't improved any, Alex," said Cousin Betty as they went down into a hole that nearly upset them.

"Nor'm, folks ain't got no time to see 'bout roads."

"Well, when that one gets as deep as a well, Alex, what will you all do?"

"Jess drive round it," said Alex stolidly.

All laughed merrily at this, and Cousin Betty suggested that Alex inaugurate the "driving round" at the next hole they came to, but was informed by him he "wan't never much as a starter of things." Alex was a true Virginian.

They arrived after a pleasant drive through the pines and found the whole family on the porch to meet them.

CHAPTER XIV

DISINTEGRATION

PAGE was always more or less overpowered by the first appearance of this grim army of eight women who occupied the old home as prisoners with Fielding at their head as a patient and kind jailer.

At present, with the exception of Nina, the youngest girl, an exotic in their midst, the entire family was in mourning for a dead uncle, an old remnant of the war, whom they had not seen for years, and who died in the Soldiers' Home, but who was nevertheless entitled to this respect, which involved expense and much labor. It was a part of the old life and must be obeyed, and was.

The sight of the helpless, overfed, round mother, the anæmic aunt, who never allowed herself a sufficient amount of food, and always chose the wing of the chicken as a matter of delicacy, the five tall, gaunt sisters, all in solemn black, sent a shudder through Page, that was partly dispelled, however, by the gay appearance of Nina, who lived among these grewsome souls like a canary bird. She rejoiced in color and sang at the top of her voice.

The home of these eight women, supported by Fielding, who tilled the earth almost night and day to keep bread in their mouths and shoes and raiment on their bodies, was one of Colonial grandeur, and year after year as Page visited there and noted the changes time

made in the faces and bearing of the inmates, she noted also the changes in the old home.

They were indescribable in a way, and yet they were there, and to-day a momentary sadness swept over her. Just as indefinable deterioration was going on in the family, in the fat mother, the anæmic aunt, and five tall sisters, so it was going on in the old home standing just as they, proud and imposing, helpless against fate. She felt that this old home was a part of the universal changes that were going on in Virginia, a part of the sacred old, slipping away never to return. Fifty years from now would there be such women as her Aunt Constance, Cousin Betty, and their hostess, these products of a poetic period surely passing away, and would there exist just such a home as this one?

She felt with a wave of tenderness there would not. Over all their present hung a dark cloud and in that cloud, in letters of fire that seemed to burn into her brain, was the word "change." Nothing that was to-day would be, the very atmosphere of Virginia was dissolving like a pearl-tinted mist, and the new atmosphere, arising from the sterile land of battlefields would be, compared to the old, opaque and dull, an atmosphere stuccoed with materialism, obtrusive and destructive.

Acutely feeling this, there was nothing that greeted her during her visit that was not sacred. The tattered silk in the carriage, the mohair sticking out of the cushions, the worn places in the carpets, the darns in the damask cloth, the linen sheets with cobwebby spots here and there, the tablecloths worn into holes and carefully patched and darned, the lace curtains hanging in strips, the broken mirrors, cracked cups

and saucers and plates, the coverings falling from the sofas and chairs, the dumb keys of the musical instruments, the fences tumbling down, the gaps in the garden, the shapeless vegetables, uneven and grotesque that came up of their own will in queer spots and corners, the barn door falling off, and the floor of the barn wearing in holes, the top of the well falling in, the well bucket suspended to a rotten rope, the uncurried horses and hard looking mules standing dismayed, all told of death, and were sacred in her eyes.

Lying in the bed that night, wakeful under the spell of impressions that had saddened her, she was aroused by the sound of buggy wheels, and a moment later she thought she heard David Lee's voice speaking to his horse. Startled, she sat up and looked out.

She had not been mistaken. The buggy was at the gate and, in the bright moonlight, she could see Dave alighting, and Fielding, as he passed down the path, greeting him.

Page felt her face flush. If they were expecting Dave, why had she not been told? She drew back from the window and laid back in her pillows as a musical laugh from Dave fell on her ear.

CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE

PAGE was surprised the next morning to find that she had spent the night in peaceful sleep. She woke invigorated by the country air, the sweet breeze that blew in the window bringing with it the song and call of birds.

Her first thought was Dave, and then conflicting feelings surrounding his arrival. First she could not deny the sense of elation, but this was offset by the recognition of the fact that Dave was pursuing her, and that there was no escaping either his presence or his influence. That Cousin Betty was at the bottom of this she did not doubt, and charged her with it during the dressing hour.

The breakfast was a cheerful one, however, and all, including Page, accepted Dave's unexpected arrival as a sudden desire on his part to go fishing with Fielding. Cousin Betty was especially bright, and Aunt Constance took two cups of coffee, a rare indulgence, and declared that the country air had already, as it had, put new life in her.

After breakfast the family dispersed to engage in their various duties. Cousin Betty ran across the field to visit a neighbor; Aunt Constance, a little fatigued, was lying on the sofa in the parlor having a long talk with the anæmic aunt, and Page found herself standing alone on the front porch.

The sun was not yet hot, and all the splendor of the

young June day was before her. A gentle breeze was blowing towards her, and in that breeze were the scents of roses, honeysuckle, violets, and sheep mint. This latter, trodden by the servants going to and fro since daylight, yielded its strong, pungent odor that Page felt she would ever remember, and had sometimes fancied might come up to her in the hour of death. It was fragrant and refreshing, a tonic perfume, sharp in contrast with the languorous sweetness of the other flowers.

The familiar scene affected her pleasurably. The turkeys, just as they had been ever since she could remember, were strutting aimlessly and proudly about the yard, the ducks were waddling, not proudly but quite as though they were drunk, and the chickens were picking industriously to satisfy appetites that never gave them rest. The sky was so blue, the grass so green, the hop vines, growing on the arbor a little way off, so vivid in shade and so exquisite, the honeysuckle, climbing on pillars and railings of the porch, so seductive, that Page stood breathless with eyes and nostrils open.

What thoughts had she not had, what skies had she not seen from the low steps of this old porch. This particular porch, with its particular flowers, that had had its particular heaven and stars, and also its particular souls to enchant, and Page had been one of those souls. It was a very ordinary porch, broad and long. Part of the top at one corner was crumbling away, and banisters were missing from the railing. A giant framework erected nearly a century ago was at one end, and upon it climbed a multiflora rosebush, which bloomed in fragrant bunches of white and faded pink. Defiantly, from some seed blown hither, sprang

forth, among these delicate tinted blooms, the Virginia creeper, with its violent scarlet blossoms, and, over all, yellow bees and humming birds were circling and quivering.

She took it all in in a kind of ecstasy lost in a beautiful dream, when Dave came through the open door, and took his stand by her side.

"Page!"

"Yes, Dave?"

"I was a little brutal the other evening — have you forgiven it?"

"Oh! Yes."

"It's sweet to be in the country, this lovely June morning, isn't it?" he then asked.

"Very," answered Page.

"We have been visiting this old home, sometimes separately, sometimes together, ever since we were little children; haven't we? I couldn't stand here, on this old porch, many moments and not think of you, nor could you stand here many moments, Page, and not think of me."

She made no reply, and for a while they listened to a bird that broke the stillness with a clear rapturous song. Then Dave continued:

"No matter what our future may be, no matter what is in store for either you or me, one of the vivid backgrounds of our lives will be this old porch, for here, in one way or another, through the various periods of our existence, I have poured my love into you. Oh! What memories for the future — memories of the silence, the odors, the damp chill, or the moisture, or the heat, they will all be with me," he tried to gaze into her eyes, but she kept them fixed on a humming bird that had settled on a honeysuckle blossom, "and

with you forever and forever. How many nights, tortured by my love for you, bewildered by some vision of you, due to some especial picture of you in a certain dress, or a certain flower worn by you that accentuated your beauty, or an old song sung by you that had stirred all my being, have I risen from my bed, while the household slept, and stolen down here to saturate myself with all the sweetness of the night, while I thought of you. You, too, have done the same; one night we met — do you remember? You do, for my lips pressed yours that night. Page!" He leaned lightly against her. "It was very sweet, that virgin kiss, and the weeks that followed when you would not look into my eyes. You cannot forget that kiss, Page. It entered into your being, just as the gust of wind over the clover field — you remember the scene of the clover that night — never to depart. It entered into you and became a part of you, and all who come into your presence will feel it as they will feel all the other things that entered into you, that night, whether from the heavens or the fields or the old garden over there, or the woods or the lake at the foot of the hill, or the river — *all* that was of your youth in Virginia."

He pressed nearer to her and pointed to a little gnarled peach tree that grew in one corner of the fence.

"Even that old peach tree is a part of you. The peaches never amounted to much and have but a faint flavor; they have been called flavorless, but they were not flavorless to you and to me, when we gathered them. You have watched that tree bloom and get its leaves, and drop its blossoms and bring forth its fruit, and you have seen that fruit ripen and have eaten of

it. That fruit is a part of you, and all will feel the influence of it."

He saw that a look of ecstasy had come into her face, and continued:

"Look beyond it to the far-reaching field. That life-everlasting, growing wild there is a part of you, Page, and those tall flowers they call weeds that grow high and have a white umbrella at the top of each stem, they are a part of you! These blackberry bushes growing riotously on the rail fences, down the lanes, and around the fields and that flower and smell so faintly sweet and then bring forth fruit that has dyed your fingers and the inside of your mouth a rich purple, they are a part of you! You are made up of all these beautiful Virginia scenes and scents and tastes. Do you not feel the charm of all this, and is not ours a wonderful land, Page? Even its tragedies, the awful blight and disaster that befell it, lend it dignity!"

"Dave," exclaimed Page, "all that you say is true, but what part are we taking in the great world? Who is thinking of us and remembering us?"

"Thinking of us — remembering us?" Dave laughed. "Why, we are thinking of ourselves — remembering each other! Haven't we Virginians ever been sufficient unto ourselves, Page! I grant that we are not at present figuring conspicuously, and that much that made us what we were in the eyes of the world has been swept away, but there is still something here, an intangible something that can never be swept away, or be destroyed. Our dead heroes breathe it into our ears through their silence; our martyred youth through their extinction; our broken-hearted appeal by their courage in denying their broken hearts!

You cannot escape your heritage, Page! Go where you will, do what you will, and old Virginia, defeated, blighted as she is, will claim you still!"

"It isn't old Virginia," cried Page, apparently following her own thoughts, "that I turn from, Dave; it's new Virginia."

"New Virginia," demanded Dave sharply, "what is that? When I hear all this talk of old and new Virginia, indignation burns me! It is, and always will be, the same old Virginia! When the grandchildren of to-day are grand-parents, it will still be the same old Virginia! That the life is different, I do not deny. We do not live, we never will live again as we did, but just as surely as the birds sing their same songs, in spite of killing frosts, so will we sing our same song! A chilling frost fell upon us; we were struck a blow almost too hard to bear. Many were killed and many were wounded past recovery, if not in body in spirit, but there is a white-faced convalescent army, still weak in the knees, still a bit dazed, struggling forward undaunted and undismayed, and they or their descendants — these unconquered remnants of old Virginia — will in due time take the place of their ancestors — be at the head of this nation! There is no new Virginia, Page, but a future for old Virginia, and if we could look into that future, who shall say that we might not cease our repining for the past? The future Virginia will ever be a part of the past Virginia, for here will dwell forever the graves of the brave, the homes of the descendants of the brave, and the monuments of the brave. Here the same flowers will bloom, the same cedars stand erect, and the same brooks laugh and leap to the same old hollows. There can be no new Virginia until the very blood of old Virginia runs

dry, and not then, for if all her citizens were to fall in battle to-morrow, their sentiments would cling to the rocks and hills and tree-tops and running streams and be perpetuated forever!"

"Dave, that is your view! Even if it were the true view, there is something, it may only be war's aftermath, that is weighing upon me, so that I feel I must flee away from it! With the exception of Nina, look at this household!"

"What of this household? Sorrows and cares are here, I know, but there is a tranquillity born of patience, the bending to, of what to them is God's will, and love for one another that nothing can overthrow. That you should be blind to this, is what I cannot understand; you ought to be a part of it!"

A nervous spasm seemed to pass over her, and she wrung her hands.

"But I am not! I am not, and I can't make any one understand! I feel an oppression that is beyond words! It seems to me that the slavery that fell from the shoulders of our slaves has fallen upon us! We *are* slaves — all of us! Slaves of poverty, slaves of old ideas, slaves to each other, slaves of ourselves! I am a slave, I feel myself a slave of a thousand intangible, but real things that hold me bound hand and foot. I can't bear it! I want to be free — free, if only for a little while to see myself, free to do something out of the ordinary routine; free to be an individual not like every one else! I tell you, Dave, we are all submerging our individuality in old ideas! We live alike, think alike, do the same things day after day! I want new people, new thoughts, a new environment to stand alone in and find out what I am — what I contain, what is in me — why I am — what I

am for! A stifled personality is crying out for breath, breath, breath — breath! And besides, I want to be something in the world!”

“You can be something in the world,” cried Dave, “by staying here; that in itself, Page, may make of you a heroine!”

“A martyred heroine! I tell you we are tied — tied to a dead past. We are afraid of it, and afraid of ourselves, afraid to advance to a new idea, a new thought, afraid to do anything but cling with all our might and main to the rotting, disintegrating old!”

“Why not, since that old represented a dream-life so irresistible that the world held its breath? We do not want the new here but the old, as far as possible, renewed and kept alive!”

“That is a mad dream! May I show you a picture? Fielding and Robert Hughes with Emily standing between them! That is what is to be — things like that. And I tell you I am afraid, a terrible dread is upon me lest I be one of the foundation stones, buried in the earth, upon which the new things will be built. I want to run away from what rises up this very moment before my eyes.”

They were blazing as she spoke, and her voice was that of a young prophetess.

“I tell you, that nothing that has been will be, and that we of the aristocracy must go to the wall! We are the vanquished ones, and in our places there is rising up a new and victorious army, headed by the common people! *Their* opportunity is at hand, they know it and will take advantage of it as Robert Hughes has! Their very hope is in the pathos of our situation, and they will be aided by slaves of luxury like Cousin Edmund. Old Virginia is dead and the new

Virginia is in the hands of a silent enemy, bent upon her extinction."

"If that is your belief, Page," Dave cried, with pulses throbbing and eyes ablaze, "a sacred and tremendous responsibility rests upon you, a responsibility that if properly shouldered will make of you one of an army of heroines second only to Joan of Arc, who gladly went to the stake for her France!"

"And what is that?"

"To be a light in this overspreading darkness!"

Breathless silence followed Dave's words. Never had woman in Virginia spoken as Page had, and for a moment it staggered him, angered him, but he controlled his emotions, and when he spoke his voice was steady and rang out like a bell.

"Not before, Page, has this sentence of death of the old life of Virginia been so boldly proclaimed. I do not say that we have not felt it, many of us have, in our hearts we knew it — Uncle Ran knew it when he retired from the world of action to the four walls of his home — I have felt it all my life, but I have tried to stifle those feelings! Our despair, yes, if need be, but our despair in silence and lit by hope! The conditions before the war were favorable, I admit, to the cultivation and preservation of sentiment, chivalry, courage — in short, to the natural development of the best in men and women. Now that the conditions are unfavorable, all the more need of trying to perpetuate these things! In cultivating and preserving the virtues of our ancestors, we will by example cause those who are beneath us to respect, emulate, and, to some extent, preserve those virtues. One man with courage and tenacity of purpose has often sufficed to raise up his whole people to higher standards. But

that is not our task. We are to teach our people to maintain their old standards! We are to preserve and perpetuate those standards of the old South, the old South with its poetry, its fragrance, its genuineness, its courtesy, and its honor. That new thoughts that will form new habits are in the air no one can deny; all the more reason for preserving the old thoughts!"

"I don't agree with you! Men like your Uncle Randolph can afford to revere and cherish and live in resigned contemplation of the old. Their day of action is over; they may content themselves by living in the memories of a vanished dream, but *we* who are the outcome of that dream have a new life with new duties before us — first of all the duty to self!"

"Page, Page, what madness is this that has taken possession of you and blinded you to all things except yourself! Grant that all you say is true, have you no desire to, as I just said, be a light in the overspreading darkness? Can you really think of deserting those older than you — those who have borne, and are still bearing patiently their deprivations, mortifications, and bitter anguish, those who need you to lean upon? Should you not remain by their side to be a comfort to them, to extend hope, even the hope that you may not believe in, that all that they cherish and value will not, even though they themselves are perishing, perish? Should not we, you and I and those like us, of our generation, keep alive as far as possible, their sentiments for them?" He leaned forward, took up one of her hands and pressed it. "Our dear stricken ones, Page!"

Dave was talking on broad lines, but Page recognized that back of it was the personal appeal and withdrew her hand.

A nettled, half-pained look crossed his features, but he controlled them and took up his theme in an even gentler tone.

"I know, dearest heart," he said, "that with your impressionable temperament, the present is often trying, and that the future looms dark before you; it does to us all, if we pause to admit it, but the lights you see beckoning you beyond us all, those gleaming lights in the far distance, are false lights. Blind your eyes to them. I feel that it is my duty at this time to warn you! Grant me disinterestedness in the sacred office of friendship. Perhaps you will say that self-interest is influencing me; so it is — I love you, but *your* interest, believe me, is my *first* thought! I don't want you to go to New York, even for a month, even for a week or a day! The atmosphere of a great city like New York is infectious. No one is immune. There is a New York fever that none escape! Those who catch it are weaned from home and their friends — they know not why. The glamour, the daily spectacle — like the gladiatorial fights of the Romans — interest them. They feel lost without its excitements. They get lonely and heart sick if they are not in the turmoil. It is no place for you. Your place is here, your mission — the mission of every Virginia girl — to be the wife of an honest man and to inspire that man to do great things that will redound to the glory of his name and shed luster on his native state. Page, are you listening to me?"

"Yes!"

"With my heart and brain full of you, I visited Cotton Hall the other day. What a wreck, but what a sacred wreck, with a foundation that cannot be destroyed, an atmosphere that wealth cannot buy! I en-

tered it with tears in my eyes, I came out with triumph in my soul. What a life was lived there, what noble thoughts, what courageous dreams! These things — those thoughts and feelings of my ancestors have buried themselves in the very walls and to those in tune with them, shine like jewels. Before I left, the place seemed illuminated. It is for sale — let me strive to offer it to you, Page — together with a love that has burned and glowed and strengthened for you every day of my life. I say I offer it to you, for with your love I can win anything I try for — as yet I know not how — but that I can I feel sure. Page!”

“Yes!”

“Answer me! I know that I am right. Your part is in our glorious stricken land, where as in every other spot on God’s green earth each human soul may have the chance he makes for himself! I cannot see you in any other sphere! Oh! my beloved, believe me, the mistress of the humblest Virginia homestead, seated at the head of the table, surrounded by her sons and daughters, and with the master of the house smiling upon her, is the real queen with the crown of gold, and the others, those queens of a materialistic existence, are the sham queens with diadems of paste. With your youth and beauty you see those diadems of paste within your grasp. But oh, Page, when you find out they are paste, when they pall and pale what is there left? Youth and beauty fade, pleasures forsake, even those who have sacrificed their souls in their pursuit. Oh! and the awakening — the bitterness, the years hold for the man or woman who sells his or her birth-right for a mess of pottage! But why these useless words!” A light, triumphant laugh escaped him, the laugh she knew and had heard the night before on his

arrival, the laugh with its slightly cruel masculine ring. "They are useless words, Page, for, do what you will, you cannot escape Virginia. No Virginian can! You may take your body away, you may go to the North, or the far South, or the East or the West, you may cross the seas and scale the highest peaks of Switzerland's highest mountain, but your soul will always be here! Look at me!" He turned her face to him and fixed his eyes in hers. "You may give your body to another, live in daily contact with another all your days, but your heart will be with me. You cannot escape Virginia, Page, and you cannot escape me. What answer have you for me?"

His last words were not a question but a command, and a flash of anger swept through her.

She stood back from him with heightened color and slightly lifted her head, exulting in his love for her and her old power over him.

"No answer!" she cried. "You followed me here, ran me to cover, but you cannot bend me to your will nor deter me from my purpose!"

For a moment he regarded her critically. Then he laughed again, and this time there was a note of harshness.

He turned and walked away from her with a rapid stride. Her eyes followed him as he joined Fielding plowing in a distant field.

The curb bit was a thing David Lee had detested all his life, but by the time he reached Fielding he had decided to use it.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FLOWER GIRL

THE day passed as all fair days in the country pass. Changes took place in the heavens as in a moving panorama; shadows fell on the grass at the accustomed hour; the song of birds grew less frequent as the heat increased, and more frequent as it diminished.

The routine of the house was in no way disturbed by the arrival of guests, the family being as used to company as to themselves. Events occurred as they must in every household; guests came and went, but the life of patient duty went on just the same, even as the ocean's tides go in and out, though the gayest ships sail upon its surface or wrecks seek its bottom.

Page took her place with the rest, sewing a little with Liela, going to the smoke-house with Maria, watching with Elva the preserving caldron that hung above a chip fire in the yard.

She was in a peculiar mood and moved about aimlessly without interest, her mind fixed upon Dave, his voice, with its oratorical cadence, lingering in her ears. What Dave had told her concerning herself that night on Gamble's Hill was quite true. He *had* changed; a new man was confronting her and this newness, the novelty of it, excited her interest.

When he finally returned to the house Nina was with him.

Page saw them from the window. Nina had in her arms a large bunch of peonies, and Page noticed that

an unusual radiance seemed shining in her face as she archly looked up at Dave, who was smiling.

An old feeling of resentment of Nina, quite familiar to her, awakened and stirred uncomfortably. Nina had always been regarded by Page in the light of a rival — in a general sense. The girl's dazzling Juno-like appearance, had often, she felt, eclipsed her own, which was of a more persuasive, appealing nature. There had been occasions at parties when it was Nina, not she, who had reigned as the belle.

While Nina was imperious and commanding, she was withal a witch among men. The sight of her turned their heads. She was a buoyant, wild creature with the strength of a young antelope. She danced with the fire of a Russian; rode horseback like the cavaliers; she eulogized and emulated; she was a boy girl with all the femininity of a goddess; she was like a goddess captured by fate and imprisoned in this old home along with seven doleful martyrs. Nobody in — or out of the family — had ever been able to account for Nina blooming like a flaming red rose in the center of a desert. She had hazel eyes made up of brown and yellow stripes that dazzled; a complexion like a camelia leaf, and a wealth of red hair that covered her head like a crown of fire, and, when unbound, fell over upon her over-full bust and Grecian shoulders in riotous and voluptuous showers.

Page saw and heard Dave obeying her orders. He drew fresh water from the well at her command, and helped her arrange the flowers in a large bowl in the hall. Then they entered the parlor and remained there alone in the darkened room playing checkers. It was a merry game, and Page could hear Nina's laugh, a young laugh, full of the triumph of youth and con-

scious power. The game continued for two hours, until, in fact, the "kitchen bell" rang a signal for dinner. Once a scuffle had ensued during the game, and, rising from her seat and glancing in, Page had seen Dave chasing Nina about the room. He captured her and was wresting something from her hand when her wealth of hair tumbled down.

"It's *my* king!" Nina was crying, but Dave, with a sharp pressure on her hand, caused her fingers to open to him and he took it. Nina's head was thrown back, a defiant look in her face, an admiring one in his, and, as their eyes met, Page felt her heart contract, and a sudden blindness came over her. For an instant she hated them both, for acute jealousy is momentary hatred of the one who inflicts it as well as the one who inspires it.

After dinner Dave went off again to the fields with Fielding, but at five o'clock he drove up to the house in his buggy, and Nina, who had already been seated in the hall with her hat on, flew to the gate, leaped to his side, not waiting to be "helped," and they drove off and did not return until all the others were seated at the supper table.

This time the girl had roses in her arms, they had been given to her by a neighbor; she had lost her hat and was laughing about it and telling Dave that it was all his fault driving so fast down the hill. She flew around the table, kissing her mother and her aunt and all the five sisters; stuck a rose in Aunt Constance's hair, and told Cousin Betty all the rest were for her except one big one that she had picked out for Page!

Page took the rose with an effort, feeling that she would like to fasten her teeth in the firm white hand that presented it. She glanced at Dave, but he had

taken his seat and was talking in a lively strain to Cousin Betty.

Fielding was standing at the foot of the table cutting slices of ham, and Nina merrily took the plates and helped everybody before she took her seat.

When supper was over Page again strolled to the porch and stood with her hands on the railing looking out. A full moon had risen and the grounds and roads and fields were so lit up that they seemed to be covered in a light fall of snow. The silence was intense, broken only by the insect orchestra that fell upon her ear awakening memories.

Finally Dave came out and took his stand beside her, the same as in the morning, and she turned and looked him squarely in the face.

"How I have hated you to-day!" she exclaimed under her breath, and he saw that she was deadly pale, paler than the moonlight could account for.

He made no reply, forcing upon her a kind of tenderness of manner that she resented. She was about to turn from him and re-enter the house, from which voices in conversation were reaching them, when Nina came out.

She had changed her gown and looked a young goddess indeed in a dress of some white clinging material and with a white rose pinned on her breast and one in her hair.

Page felt all the girl's delight in herself and a certain robustness and health about her that she feared as a contrast to her morbidness and pallor. She recognized, with a kind of start, that she had grown thin recently and struggled to maintain her courage and ease of manner before Dave and this exuberant and exultant girl.

"Aren't you feeling well, Page?" the girl asked, slipping an arm about her. "You seemed so silent at supper, and why did you come out here all alone? Let's take a walk down to the big gate. Fielding will be busy for an hour yet, Dave!"

She was still in her merry mood and Page had to succumb to her dragging them both along with her.

The night had grown cool and refreshing with the strong pungent scents of the fields pressing inward.

Out in the open road Nina's spirits rose beyond bounds. She dropped Page's hand and still holding by one of Dave's, she ran like a deer, dragging him after her. She kept this up for quite a distance and then she stopped breathless, and, laughing, held her hand to her beating heart.

Page, also in a white dress, was following wearily. She wanted to turn back but could not do so for fear of betraying her feelings. Nina knew full well that Dave had always been in love with Page and the slightest action on her part would only add to the girl's triumph that he had neglected Page for her.

She resented Nina fiercely, far more so than Martha Morton. All her ugliest emotions were aroused, emotions that retrospectively always surprised her. She would have liked to injure the girl, efface her, but she had to follow in the wake of one of her mad pranks or appear before her ridiculous. Her feet almost refused to carry her along. For one instant she did pause, and there came over her, accompanied by a feeling of helplessness, the feminine desire to destroy all the women in the world and stand alone.

She recovered from this and walked on dazed, scarcely knowing what she was doing or thinking.

Suddenly she experienced another one of those emo-

tions common to her, when in her own sight she was but a nonentity, a piece of lifeless clay, something spiritless — useless. She felt her courage, before this insolently dominating creature, fresher, younger, more luxuriant than herself, completely fail her.

Then she saw that Dave had left Nina and was coming back for her and her heart leaped.

When he reached her, he stopped with his back to Nina, in front of her.

“I want to speak to you to-night, Page,” he said, “before you retire. When the others go up come out on the porch. I shall be waiting for you.”

“There is nothing for you to say to me,” she answered coldly.

“There is a great deal to say,” he returned. “I shall expect you.”

Then they went forward and Nina strolled towards them.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CURB BIT

"You made such a point of asking me to wait up to-night to speak to you that I did so," said Page in a cold voice from the doorway that led to the porch where Dave was standing with his back to the railing in the shadow of the multiflora rose vine. His eyes had been fixed for some moments on the doorway. As she appeared and spoke, he put out his hand. "Come here, Page."

"Can't you say what you wish to from there?" she asked. "I am a little tired to-night; I wish to go upstairs."

"No, I cannot, I want to talk to you — come here!"

Resenting the command in his tone, yet unable to resist it, she approached him reluctantly.

"What is it you wish to say to me?"

He took her hand and drew her to him.

"That I love you — that I never have loved you as I have to-day!"

"You showed it," she returned and instantly regretted her words.

"No, I didn't show it — I hid it! I've been acting a part, an unworthy part! I was wondering before you appeared just now if there was anything I would not do for the sake of my love! I know I would do all the great things, I believe now I would do all the wicked things, even the mean, low, cruel things. There is no height I would not try to ascend to, no

depths I would not stoop to! I've been guilty of a trick to-day; I've been trying to make you jealous! I hope I succeeded, for I suffered enough. I broke down, I drove that girl home like mad; her hat blew off and I wouldn't stop to let her pick it up — I realized I had been throwing away precious hours. When I got here I was strong; I wouldn't meet your eyes; I kept it up — the day is gone, and I haven't been with you — it's gone and I never can get it back! Do you understand now why I asked you to come out here to me to-night?"

"I thought you seemed very content with Nina," answered Page.

"Then you pay a tribute to my acting; I tried to appear to you content — more — I was trying to make you jealous! I look upon Nina as Fielding does, and her sisters do. She's a dear, brave, courageous girl, making the best of life out of nothing; I always think of her as dancing at a funeral to keep from breaking down; she's the most heroic little thing in all the world! She hates the idea of teaching as I might hate the idea of Hell itself, but she told me to-day she was trying hard to get a position so as to take some of the burden off of Fielding. It brought the tears to my eyes, poor little brave soul, and I used her to-day, used her as a tool to fight my own battle. It made me ashamed! I repeat, is there anything I wouldn't do for the sake of my love for you! And how little comprehension you seem to have of it!"

He pushed her almost roughly from him and they stood a while in silence.

The old house was quiet; the moon was under a cloud, all was darkness except for a light that streamed from the library window, where Fielding was

waiting for Dave, and settled on the ground like a mammoth jewel. Nothing but silence and darkness and the sweet odors pouring forth from garden and field like a song.

"One instant to-night," Dave finally continued, "it all, all that I had been trying to do to inflict pain on you, seemed worth while. It was in the road when you lost confidence in yourself and faltered and wanted to go back; the moment when I felt that you needed me and I went back to meet you. I wanted you to lose confidence in yourself, I always want you to lose confidence in yourself that you may turn to me! Turn to me now, Page — come into my arms. Whether you mean to give yourself into my keeping or not, whether you are going away or whether you are going to stay, whether it is right or wrong, come into my arms for this once. What can anything matter? I'm so tired of loving you hopelessly; so hungry for one moment's reward!"

To her surprise he put out his arms and drew her to him and a moment later she felt his tears on her throat and his slender form shaken by sobs.

Page did not know how long they remained thus. She was feeling that Dave convulsed by sobs, his eyes overflowing with tears, was a terrible thing. A realization of his love for her and the suffering it was causing him, overcame her. A great pity for him, for conditions, for Nina, herself, all things filled her heart, so that tears gushed into her own eyes. Then mingled with her feeling of indefinite sadness and helpless regret, was a great joy, the joy of a strong man's surrender to her and of her complete possession. She felt like folding this great human possession in her arms and keeping it there against her heart forever.

His lithe body was warm and she could feel his heart-beats that were strong as the blows of a sledge hammer bent upon the destruction of his frame. Finally she felt herself melting under his fierce embrace that had become fixed, as it were, for all eternity. Her limbs began to give way beneath the weight of a form that was becoming an inert mass that would fall without his support. Her arms lifted involuntarily and clasped this form that was pressed to hers, and Dave returned the pressure with arms that were like steel and hurt her, feeling himself in an opium dream, soothed, contented at last.

Finally he raised his head and Page barely recognized the face she caught sight of. It was strange and new, illumined and pathetic, yet cruel.

"Page," he whispered, "put back your beautiful head, give me your sweet, sweet lips! Oh! you will! My love! My love!"

A moment later he lifted his head, laid his hands heavily on her shoulders, and gazed into her subdued eyes, his own blazing in triumph.

"I have branded you with that kiss," he cried; "my mark will be upon you forever — into eternity itself you will bear it! Speak aloud the love I have just felt; tell it to me — I want to hear you speak the words! Do you love me? Do you, my darling?"

"Dave," she cried, freeing herself and standing apart from him, "I *do* love you, but even in the moment of this confession I feel a stronger call, that I know, against my will, will bear me away from you! It is the call of self! Self that is crying out for freedom — to break away from the old and enter in upon the new! Why this call I do not know! But it is as insistent in

my heart as the never ceasing cry of the birds in the woods or the restless movements of the fish in the sea. It never ceases, never gives me rest, it always is — the I, I, I, that must be satisfied before I part with it — before it is sacrificed even to you!”

“Then go!”

The words sprang from his lips like a pistol shot. Page felt herself start as though she had been struck by them and then her eyes fell upon his face that seemed to be electrically charged and blazing. She could see his eyes shining and the live hair glistening and on his compressed lips an expression she had never seen before and that sent terror through her.

“Go!” he repeated, “and send Nina to me!”

“Nina!”

“Yes, Nina! I’m going to ask her here, now, this very moment, to be my wife! She may not consent — I believe she will! I’m better than teaching school — becoming a school teacher! I’m going to take her home with me and give her an unconscious task to perform! I’m going to make her teach me to forget you! I’m going to make her youth, her eyes, her lips, that lovely wonderful hair, that divine form, all my instruments to work against you — to oust you from my heart — to trample every memory of you under my feet!”

“*Dave*, have you gone mad?”

“No, I’m getting my senses! I’ve been mad all my life about you! Your spirit, your soul, all the things I find you don’t possess, and I’m sick and tired, worn out with that madness! In the niche where my adoration of you has dwelt, I am going to put a beautiful woman!”

“Dave! Dave!” and the words were a gasp.

"Take back those words! You didn't mean them! Tell me! Did you mean them?"

"No, no, a thousand times no! I'm fighting for you! Come into my arms, put your head on my breast! I love you! I love you!"

She fell against him and for a moment the earth became a liquid sea of love and poured into them all its enchantment.

In their ears was the sound of a banjo from a distant negro cabin and the old familiar echo of the whippoorwill.

Page drank in the sweetness of these old familiar sounds as one takes a last view of things while the shore recedes from sight.

CHAPTER XVIII

RESTING ON CONVENTIONS

A LITTLE later she crept up the steps stealthily and entered the room that she occupied with Nina.

Her own bed had been turned down by the girl's fair hands, a bowl of sweet peas, a candle and some matches placed on a little table beside it.

Across the room, under a window with the moonlight flooding her, Nina lay asleep, all her wealth of tawny hair flung over the pillow and one snow white arm buried in the meshes. With a shoulder partly exposed the girl was like some marvelous recumbent statue into which a genius had poured his soul.

Page crept to the side of the bed and gazed upon her with that solemn wonder that one feels in beholding a masterpiece. She never forgot the vision and long after she went to bed the thought of this radiant luminous creature imprisoned in this old house day after day, year after year, weighed upon her.

Half undressed she took her seat on the side of her bed, still under the spell of Dave's kiss, and fell to thinking. For a while she experienced a languorous feeling of contentment, a slipping away of all contention of opposing conditions, and all the charm and rest of throwing the oars of her life into Dave's hands, drifting as he willed it. She was as one resting from battle. But soon she was again attacked by a sense of oppression and, rising slowly, she stretched out her

arms to the mystery of the beyond. Then with a half guilty feeling she crept into bed.

The room was directly over the library and after a while she heard Fielding and Dave in low, earnest conversation. Later they passed out of the house and sitting up and looking out of the window, she saw them walking slowly down the road, two tall slender forms, in many respects alike — in their veins the blood of cavaliers, on their hearts the scars of rebellion, with minds alive to imperious sentiment.

Page felt all this. How like two brothers they were, and how much this visit of Dave's meant to Fielding! They had always, since little lads, who went fishing and swimming and hunting together, loved each other dearer than brothers and their friendship had never known a ripple on its pure surface. Dave had his arm over Fielding's shoulder and she rejoiced that Fielding was having this hour that meant so much in his life. She fell asleep thinking of them.

"You are looking a little worn, Fielding," Dave was saying. "Nina tells me, you have been having chills."

"I have been, Dave,"

"You must take better care of yourself. You must keep out of the sun and the heat of the day."

"How often have you said that to me, Dave, but how can I? I've got to keep in the sun, or the rain, or whatever comes along for the day. There is nothing for me but work," he smiled sadly, "in all weathers. There are, besides my own, eight mouths to feed, eight bodies to clothe and keep warm, all dear to me and only my hand and the dull earth."

Fielding had always been remarkable, just as had Dave, for his clear sweet voice, so that the simplest words fell from his lips like a poem.

They had paused in their walk and were standing in the moonlit road beside an old rail fence.

"The earth, you know, Dave," he continued, "is like a jealous friend. You must be always giving it your attention or it will develop into something hideous. Weeds spring up upon it like evil moods of the selfish friend and it takes time and strength to live down what your neglect has allowed to flourish. So to the man who takes up with the earth it's always work! But," he added wearily, "what does it matter, after all, our individual fatigues and woes? When you come to think of it we over-estimate ourselves."

Dave did not reply to this. He loved the sound of Fielding's voice, with its silver cadence of sadness and all about them, like an accompaniment to it, was the wonderful charm of the summer night.

Presently, however, he spoke. "I still say that you must take care of yourself," he said firmly.

"Oh! I am all right; it isn't easy to kill a sinewy son of toil like me by such easy methods — I really am all right, though they all think otherwise. Haven't I borne everything for years, until they took from me the one thing — my inspiration under all trials? I mean Emily, of course."

He laid his left hand on Dave's shoulder and as Page was never to forget the vision of Nina, this night, Dave was never to forget his friend's face. Pale, the soulful eyes a bit haggard, the sunburned cheeks hollowed, the bone of the handsome, strong jaws becoming outlined, and an expression that was almost tragic. "Oh! my God, Dave, when I think of her father giving her over to that brute for the sake of his own physical comfort, I want to go there and strangle him before the deed is accomplished. I feel murder in my heart! I

saw her last week, she was giving a party — you were there, I believe; she came out to the sidewalk — you knew I had been denied the house?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I heard this party was a farewell party, and I went there and walked up and down the sidewalk willing her to consciousness of it! And she came to me, Dave!” He paused and then went on. “Several times I saw her at the window, her little face framed in her hands looking out. At last she saw me — I saw her turn quickly as though to run and knew then I had only to wait — that my love was coming to me to say farewell. It’s since that night that I haven’t felt well — not been able to steady myself. You know how sweet she is! Was there ever anything created on earth or in heaven as sweet as she is? And they are sacrificing her, Dave, sacrificing her, and I, may God help me, I can’t save her! What can I do? I’ve been wanting to see you! What can I do, Dave? If it was Nina, do you *know* what I would do? Plunge a dagger in her heart as Virginius plunged a dagger into his daughter’s heart!”

“Fielding,” Dave cried, looking in alarm on the anguished, distorted countenance, “you must not talk so intemperately. Hard as your lot is, Emily’s is harder, and look at her sustained by the courage of a martyr sacrificing self for others! Do you know she is *ready* to do this thing? There is something sublime in it. Take courage from that! And you are not the only one. Did you know that Page is thinking of going to New York?”

“I have heard it, yes, Dave, but I thought — I hoped it would be all fixed up between you to-night.”

“Page is impressionable, she was under my influence

to-night and the spell of environment, but my battle is not won by any means. It's almost as hard for me to stand by and see Page go to New York, as for you to see Emily enter the home of Robert Hughes."

"Oh! No!" Fielding answered with a shudder, and after a pause. "Oh! This restlessness, Dave, that is beginning to gnaw at the hearts of our women! Everywhere I go I am confronted by it — women attempting to take steps independent of man. Have you heard that Nina wants to go away and teach school — become a school teacher in a public school?"

"Yes, she told me to-day."

"Well, she never shall! My God, Dave, she never shall! When she goes from my arms, from my care, from this old home that she is the light of, it must be to a better love and a better home! She thinks, God bless her, Dave, that if she gets out of the way, leaves one less mouth to feed, I might snatch Emily from them and bring her here! God bless her, Dave!"

He put his hands upon Dave's shoulders and fixed his smoldering eyes in his. "What are we going to do about it, Dave, this restlessness that poverty has engendered in our women?"

"I'll tell you what we are going to do about it, Fielding," Dave cried, "we're going to fight it, fight it to the finish with the last drop of blood in our veins as we fought in the Civil War for the protection of the home and fireside. We're going to fight to keep them in their places, where they belong — because that is the only way to keep them pure and true and happy! Try not, at any rate, for the present, to think on these things, Fielding! Do you know," he added, "that you are in a very excited mental condition? You must get away and take a rest, my friend! Put a hired man in

your place and come to me a few days. Mother said I must not fail to exact a promise of you before I left. Will you?"

"I'll think about it, Dave."

They stood still quite a while after this, each silently filled with the presence of the other and holding on to every moment and then, still silent, they strolled slowly towards the house.

The next morning Dave was off by daylight and later in the day the other guests took the boat.

CHAPTER XIX

A LIFE AT STAKE

“MARSE DAVE! Marse Dave!”

The voice, half shriek, half wail, rang through the bare uncarpeted hall and Dave looked up quickly from the newspaper he was reading. He knew the voice; it was Martha's and there was liquor in the tones. She strode into the room with the step of an Indian and stood straight and wild-eyed before him.

Her usually neat appearance had, in a measure, forsaken her; her dress was torn, her apron rumpled, and her calico flat-bonnet, with its ornate ruffled cape, hung limp about her startled terror-stricken face.

“Well, Aunt Martha,” asked Dave quietly, “what is it?”

For answer she flung herself emotional and half intoxicated at his feet, crying out again: “Marse Dave! Marse Dave!”

“Well, Aunt Martha,” he repeated, with a tinge of impatience this time, “what is it — what's the trouble?”

“It's Sam, Marse Dave,” exclaimed the poor demented creature.

Dave frowned. “He's been up to more mischief?” he asked sternly.

Martha knelt before him and broke forth: “Naw, naw, Marse Dave, befo' de livin' Gaud he ain't done nothin' dis time — he wrongfully 'cused!”

“Of what?” demanded Dave sharply.

"He broke out de jail," the poor soul went on, rocking her body backwards and forwards as she talked; "he stole his way to de woods ter hide fur fear of bein' kotched, en —" she broke off and commenced wringing her hands.

"Well, Aunt Martha, go on," said Dave commandingly.

"Er week ago dey found a white gal in de woods 'long whar he had been, some devil done choked her ter deaf and kase Sam escaped de jail en somebody seen him in de woods dat day, dey done put it on him en dey houndin' him ter deaf! En it 'tain't so, Marse Dave, it 'tain't so!"

Her tears gushed forth and streamed down her lean cheeks and her body heaved.

Dave's countenance during this recital had become severe. His jaws squared and his eyes grew dark. Suddenly he leaned forward and caught her by the shoulders, and, with a powerful grip, steadied her rocking body. "Aunt Martha," he asked, looking sternly into the tear-blurred, bloodshot eyes, "did Sam do this thing?"

She freed herself, and the dim eyes flashed as she threw up both arms. "Befo' de livin' Gaud, Marse Dave, he didn't! Sam er thief, only Gaud knows how dat is, Sam er thief, but he wouldn't hurt de hair of no white chile dat breathe de breaf of life! Ain't Marse Ran, en Miss Helen done raised him?" She looked almost triumphantly for a moment into his searching eyes and then went on: "Times is hard en he done strayed, but he ain't never blackened his soul like dat, en I knows it!"

Dave had caught the flash of truth and the triumphant look born of the mother's pride and sincerity,

and after holding her gaze for an instant, he exclaimed, excitedly, "Aunt Martha, I believe you!"

For a moment there was a breathless pause while the worshipful eyes of the old slave still looked into the trusting ones of the young man, and then she caught his hands.

"Gaud bless you, Marse Dave, Gaud bless you; I know'd you'd believe ole Martha what your angel grandma taught never ter tell er lie! I knowed you'd b'lieve me! But dat ain't all, Marse Dave, I wants you ter go wid me ter help me save my boy! Dey still huntin' him in de woods round ole Martin Jorden's plantation. But Sam done worked dar harvest time, ever since he knowed how ter talk, en knowed every inch er ground en every tree on de place, en every hid-in' hole, so he 'scaped 'em, en night before larst at free o'clock in de mornin' he knock on de window pane. I knowed 'twas him afore I heard him callin' low like, 'mother, mother,' en I knowed thar was trouble. I got up en open de do' soft, en he come in an' fell down on de flo' like er dog tired out from huntin'. Dey'd been houndin' him four nights en days, en he ain't never had er mouthful ter eat," a child-like look crossed her features, "but my boy got home, my boy got home ter me!"

She buried her face sobbing, and Dave allowed her a moment to compose herself.

"Well?" he asked finally, his voice cutting the stillness.

Martha changed her kneeling position to a seat on the floor at his feet.

"He was well-nigh starved," she exclaimed, "his clothes was harf torn off'n him, en he done fall off twell I hardly knowed him. Sam's so big, Marse

Dave," she said wistfully, "en seein' his great bones most skeered me. I got him sumfin to eat, en when he done et it, all de time lookin' round en listenin', he tole me how I got ter hide him. So I put him down in de cellar, wid er mattress en er quilt, en fur two days I kyard his victuals ter him, but now I feared, kase last night ole Catlin Jefferson say dey sure guine git track uv him, en when dey do, dey guine come dar en take him out en tear him ter pieces. I done shet up de house same ez nobody dar, en I wants you ter go back wid me, Marse Dave, and guard de do'!"

Her brown face grew ashen and her voice was almost a shriek as she continued: "Lord, Gaud, Marse Dave, let'm put him in prison, let'm hang him if dey got ter, but don't let'm tear my boy ter pieces!" she clasped her hardened hands and stared up at him. "I come fur you ter go wid me en stand guard over de house en keep'm back. 'Tain't nobody but you ken save him!"

"Aunt Martha, stand up!"

She dragged herself to her feet at his command, and, still a little dazed by drink, looked squarely at him.

Dave lifted his right hand.

"Do you swear by the living God and my grandmother, who was as a mother to you, that you believe Sam innocent of this crime?"

With a sublime look upon her face she, one of the martyred ones of her time, lifted up her two hands and took her oath.

"I does, Marse Dave," she cried in a loud voice, "I swear befo' de livin' Gaud en Mistiss I b'lieve my boy ain't done dis thing!"

"Then I'll go with you, Aunt Martha," said Dave,

his voice choked by emotion, his eyes gleaming with grim determination, "and they will take Sam over my dead body!"

He took up his slouch hat that lay on the table, and the two wandered forth together.

CHAPTER XX

THE FREEDMAN'S INHERITANCE

NOT a word passed between them as they strode rapidly through the sunny streets, each filled with anxious thoughts.

The day was perfect but momentarily growing hotter. Already the sun began to burn through one's clothing.

As was Dave's habit, he took off his hat and swung it in his hand as he walked along, leaving exposed the classic head, with its thick, glistening hair. One saw in this glaring daylight the beauty and strength of the face, with its touch of sadness that lent to it a noble pathos. It was the sadness peculiar to the Southern countenance of that day; a remnant of the sadness that had swept like a cloud over thousands of heroic souls on the day of Lee's surrender and left its impression.

The hour was soon after breakfast, and the inhabitants, idle by nature, were not yet settled down to the tasks of the day. The streets and front yards were gay. Pretty women in sunbonnets, some with an old negro at their heels, were digging and looking after flowers in the yards; some were cutting them. Young girls were in groups; some reading aloud to each other, having assumed affectionate positions; some idle, given up to that indolent repose so natural to them; some were embroidering and others were working in human hair, making watch-chains, bracelets, and brooches, which were the fashion of the day. Groups of chil-

dren were busy about the gates or on the sidewalks with their "memory strings," which consisted of a collection of buttons of various colors and descriptions, each one attempting to have the longest string, and whoever had the most Confederate buttons had the most valuable. Several ran up to beg a button. He absently touched their sunny heads or smiled at them without replying, and went on.

The walk was quite a long one, and when they reached the narrow quarter of the city where old Martha had her little shanty of a home, they found it swarmed with a motley crowd of negroes.

Martha's terror returned. She would have shrieked but Dave grasped her by the arm, commanded silence, and they pushed on through the crowd, which increased each moment.

Men, women, and children were issuing from their wretched abodes from all quarters. There must have been already assembled some hundreds, and they kept increasing in numbers, as though, beneath the rear of the house, the earth had opened to supply them. They were hatless, and the younger ones, male and female, for the better part, shoeless. Their costumes were grotesque; some almost in rags were, like old Martha, neat. These were the older ones, but many, the majority, were dirty, as though their wretched clothing had been worn night and day for weeks. Shining black skins shone through the rents in their attire. Girls had on waists and skirts that parted at the waistline, showing the flesh; little urchins held up their ragged trousers with bits of wood for buttons, and many a bare shoulder protruded from coarse yellow cotton shirts. Women held their babies to their naked breasts, unabashed, and allowed the children that could

walk, and who were scarcely clothed at all, to cling to their skirts. Cur dogs ran in and out of the crowd or sat on the small porches looking astonished.

The eyes of this motley band of freed half-savages expressed little. They stared vacantly or rolled about from side to side sullenly. Their thick lips were parted expectantly, and Dave seemed to feel the half-conquered passions of these partly civilized creatures ready to burst forth. All the bloodshed that had brought about the conditions that faced him pressed upon him and gripped at his heart. For one moment his mind traveled to the sunny past, but a great loneliness attacked him as of the world itself lost and he quickly returned to the present, the present with its horrors, its crimes, its poverty, its demoralization, its lost souls, its restless women.

All the noble aspirations that patient forbearing men had expended on these black beings, all the thoughts of virtuous, gentle women, many of whom had given up their lives to making God-fearing Christians of them had, as it were, vanished to the four winds of heaven, and the evil that had been eliminated by care and faithful watching seemed now gathered in a great cloud ready to burst and shower down what it had accumulated that it might be reincarnated.

He felt ready for miracles of horror. If flames had burst through the earth, burning the feet and igniting the clothing of this forsaken people, it would not have surprised him.

A great pity filled his heart for them, these poor slaves, who had been cared for with affection, and who had been cruelly ignored. He recognized what a weary thing is the progress of humanity under the best conditions — what a hopeless thing under conditions like

these. He saw no hope on the faces about him, and all soul progress seemed suspended. Each countenance betrayed ignorance and rank lust. Pride had become practically extinguished in these abandoned beings, and he knew that without pride in himself man must fall. The awful pathos of it gripped him. He longed to be the captain of these poor creatures, to gather them all, the ragged, the hungry, the brutal, the misdirected, the evil as well as the good, into an army and lead them forth from their unjust punishment and the darkness of their awful present. Oh! that he could sweep away their ignorance, efface their want, loose the chains of error and superstition that bound them!

He grew older and almost majestic as these imaginative thoughts traveled through his brain.

Many recognized him and extended greetings such as "Dar Marse Dave," "Marse Dave done come," or "Howdy, Marster?"

He said nothing in return, as he had said nothing to the little children drawn to him as he passed through the streets. But a great love was in his heart for them. Out of his little he had never refused help to any black man or woman who had ever come to him in trouble; he was here to help one now, and the thought swept joy through his veins. Suddenly he lost sight of the depravity that hunger and fear and desperate times had left upon these faces; he did not even see the filth and squalor they existed in; he forgot the evil passions that might so easily be aroused. To him they were the poor "niggers" whom the South was unable to do for any longer. For one instant a tear flashed in the fine eye, but the next the head was lifted higher, a strong control was put upon the features and the step became firmer. A stranger

arriving on the scene might have taken him for a new prophet.

Martha, whom the excitement and long walk had partly sobered, was ecstatic. She seemed to have forgotten her son's danger in the knowledge that he had a protector. Pride was in her step, adoration in her half-lifted face as she kept close by his side or followed at his heels.

Suddenly a sharp voice called out, "Dey comin'!" But no one took it up, and for a while the suppressed emotions of the excited mob continued.

At last, however, as though their smoldering feelings had begun to stifle them, there were sounds of mutterings and sudden exclamations. One old woman, half in her dotage, dragged herself up on one of the higher porches and cried out as though the matter had been pondered and finally understood, "Who comin'? Dat what I ax — who comin'?"

Her voice was a cracked wail, and all eyes turned upon her. Her throat and lean chest were bare, and her old wrinkled face, with its blurred eyes and tangled silvery hair, had the look of a maniac. She had on a ragged calico dress and a more ragged apron covered the front of it. The skirt of the dress was short and showed her stockingless feet in a pair of man's shoes. Her eyes began to give out a dull flame, and there was something heroic in her wild, fearless attitude.

"What de Bible say?" she cried out. "Don't it say dat de sun shall shine on de black ez well ez de white?"

"Praise de Lord!" shouted back an enormous black woman, pushing her way through the crowd and throwing up her arms.

"Dat right, sister Susan," called an aged man, "en He right heah in de midst. He stand by de thief en de soul in trouble ez well ez dem dat ridin' high!"

"Heah now," shouted the giantess, "heah now! Uncle Martin done spoke!"

"Dey comin', dough," shouted an urchin, "en dey guine tear Sam Washington limb from limb en burn'm er-live!"

The mob again responded, and old 'Brosia, growing more excited, repeated in a loud voice: "Dey comin', is dey? Who comin'? Dat what I ax? En how dey comin'? Wid dey knives en pistols en dey light-wood knots, is dey? Dey talkin' moughty proud 'bout tearin' niggers ter pieces en burn'm er-live!" She raised aloft her bony fist and shook it. "Let'm come; dey fin' out sumfin too!"

"Dat dey will, Aunt 'Brosia, dey fine out sumfin moughty quick, too!" called back old Martin.

She laughed with diabolical delight at the response to her words. "Sposen," she shouted in a still higher key, "dat when dey gets heah evy nigger in dis gang fling er flatiron at de heads, what den?"

"Den dey see sumfin!" Susan returned, and a burst of guffaw laughter followed from the crowd.

She now raised both bony arms. "I don tole you what de Bible say!"

The mob responded with grunts and amens, and without another word and with a half-absent look in her colorless eyes, she descended as though nothing had happened, and took her stand with the rest.

During this outburst Dave said nothing. He began to feel penetrating him the ignorance and evil feelings of these dark-skinned beings about him. The old woman nearing her hundredth year was as logical

a mouthpiece as existed in their midst. He walked on through the crowd that grew denser each moment, and finally reached Martha's home. Mounting the few steps he took his stand on the small porch, with his back to the door he had come to guard.

It was now nearly noon, and the sun beat down hotter than ever. It had not rained for days, and the small trees above the heads of the people were dust-covered and drooping. In the many yards which presented themselves to his gaze sun-flowers, tiger-lilies, and many coarse but gorgeous plants bloomed triumphantly. And there were flowers interspersed, verbenas that trailed upon the ground, cabbage roses of thick clumsiness, others of violent scarlet and a few white ones that looked sick and pallid and served to bring out the vividness of the rest.

Lines of laundry work, done for the whites, hung motionless in the rear or at the sides of the houses and upon the palings were patched quilts and red flannel and other garments, all giving a dazzling, barbaric effect to the scene. And not a cloud was in the sky, which was clear and blue as a sapphire.

CHAPTER XXI

LYNCH LAW

ALL of a sudden there was a clatter of horses' hoofs and six horsemen, unmindful of life or death, dashed through the mob, and, throwing their horses on their haunches, reined up before Aunt Martha's home.

What riders they were and what a handsome, daring set, young and dashing; just the same sort of gallant reckless youths that twenty years ago had plunged madly into battle, and of whom nothing was now left but a turfed mound, and the spirit that lived in such as these!

"What are you doing here, Dave Lee?"

"Standing guard over Sam Washington," Dave thundered back, his voice charged with excitement. He had taken off his coat, and was standing in front of the frail door, his arms outstretched and fastened against it as though nailed.

"Get out of the way, Dave; we're going to have that nigger!"

"Not unless he is the right nigger, boys; you've got to be sure of that first!"

"We don't want to hurt you, Dave, but we tell you once more to get away from that door — get out of the way. We want that nigger, and we are going to have him!"

"Not unless he is the *right* nigger," repeated Dave. "How do you know he is the man you want? You don't know it, and as long as you don't, he is under my

protection, and the only way you can lay hands on him is over my dead body!"

"Dar now!" shouted Uncle Martin, and the negroes broke into cheers.

"Deliver up that nigger, Dave; we give you one more chance," and a pistol came in sight from a hip pocket.

For an instant the pallor of death spread over Dave's face, but except for that he might have been a piece of marble. Suddenly his eyes flashed and he sprang forward. "Put up that pistol, Kennon Fleming! You're not facing an enemy, boys," he cried, "and before you commit murder listen to me! You've been on this hunt for days and nights, you're tired out, probably hungry. Some of you have been drinking and are half drunk. Your nerves are dulled. I see it in your faces. You are ready to even commit a crime to be through with this job, but I'm not going to stand by and let you do it! If I thought Sam Washington was your man, how long do you think it would take me to hand him over to you? You all know me, and you know just how long! Sam Washington may be guilty, I'm not prepared to swear he isn't, but I believe he is innocent, and as long as I do, he is my prisoner so long as I can hold him, and not yours! I know things look black for Sam! I know he is a thief; I know he broke out of jail; I know he was seen in the neighborhood of this crime you're attempting to avenge, but I don't believe he had any more to do with that crime than you or me! I'm not afraid of you! There isn't a man among you who will dare lay hands on me or Sam Washington either! Why? Because you don't know he is your man!"

Dave's electrified appearance and the effect of his

oratory were magical. The negroes stared aghast and the men he was appealing to weakened. Suddenly they seemed to realize that it was David Lee whom they were facing, and not an opposing force.

"You shoulder the responsibility, Dave," Fleming cried out, lowering his pistol; "it's on you, remember?"

"Certainly!" Dave cried.

"Then we had as well continue our search elsewhere, boys. It's Dave's nigger, anyway. He's got the right to stand by him and see that he gets fair play! Come on!"

Plunging their spurs into their horses, they turned and dashed away through the crowd, scattering them helter-skelter.

All the while this scene had been enacted old Martha was standing by the little pillar to the porch, her eyes fixed on Dave as upon an apparition. Suddenly she threw up her arms. Fearing an hysterical scene, Dave turned to her, a sharp command in his voice.

"Aunt Martha, go and tell Sam to come up here. We've got to turn him over to these two gentlemen." He motioned to two policemen who had arrived upon the scene.

Giving one look in his face to reassure herself, Martha took a key from her pocket, opened the frail door and entered the house.

When she finally led Sam forth, exclamations and ejaculations broke forth anew from the mob, such as "Umph!" "Dar now!" "Praise de Lord!"

Martha stood in silence beside her son, her face, tranquillized by love and gratitude, shining upon them all with a radiance that was hardly of the world. In her look was pride, pride in this great black thief who

was her son, and who in spite of the fact of his rags, might easily be imagined as an expatriated African Prince.

Towering a full head above his fellows, with clean, straight limbs and a body pliant and graceful as a deer's, he stood dazed, docile and helpless, still terrified, but also with a look of relief on his tortured countenance. For some moments not a word was spoken, and the poor hounded, half-starved creature looked about him absently till his eyes rested in Dave's. Then tears gathered and rolled in broad streams down the shiny black cheeks. "Thankee, Marse Dave," he said.

Dave went up to him and laid one hand kindly upon his shoulder. "Sam," he said gently, "I've got to send you back to prison; when you come out, try to be a good man. Gentlemen," he then added quietly to the two officers, "take your prisoner."

As the handcuffs were clasped upon Sam's wrists and they led him away, Page, who had been hidden behind the giant form of the negress Helen, leaped to the porch to Dave's side.

CHAPTER XXII

HANDS ON THE BIBLE

FOR one moment Dave stared at her dumb-struck, and then he almost swung her into the open door. Martha followed them quickly, closed it and stood, also in amazement, looking on.

"What are you doing here, Page?" demanded Dave, breathlessly.

"I was coming with this bundle — it's sewing for Aunt Martha — I often come to bring her work. When I got here I saw the crowd and thought there was a fire — I heard those men arriving on horseback and thought at first it was the fire-engines. Then they rushed past me, and I recognized them and saw a look on their faces that terrified me. I saw Uncle Martin and asked him what the trouble was, and he told me that you were here guarding Sam, and that your life was in danger! I ran, pushing everybody out of my way! I heard your voice speaking to the men and I stopped, out of sight of you, to listen! I saw Kennon Fleming take out his pistol, and I thought I was going to faint! For a moment I did lose consciousness, I believe, for I found old Helen was holding me up. I got behind her then — told her to hide me — but I could see you! All the while you were speaking my eyes were on your face! Dave! Dave! They might have killed you!"

"You might have been killed yourself!" Dave cried.

"Suppose there had been a riot here! You should

have gone back when you saw the crowd! You might have been trampled to death under the feet of horses! God only knows what might not have happened!"

"Naw, naw," old Martha cried, springing forward excitedly. Her face was shining in rapture, and she clapped her hands. "Naw, naw, Gaud was here, en He wan't guine to let nothin' happen! Wan't you savin' Sam? I'm glad de chile happened here; glad she come; glad she seen you ez I did, and heard yo' words! Dey been tellin' me, Miss Page standin' out 'gainst yo' love! She kyarnt do dat no more now since she done see you ez er man! She got ter love you now en give herself in yo' hands. Ain't you, honey? Lord, Lord, Miss Page, take his love, chile, take et now, right here from to-day! 'Tain't nothin' I ken do but fall down on my knees to him!" She did so as she spoke. "All I ken do is ter bless his name; but you ken make him happy all his days!"

She sprang up and raised her arms, her face still shining in joy and adoration! "Take him, honey, yes, yes, let yo' heart fly out right into his'n! Ain't he grand, ain't he noble looking, just like old Marse, jess like old Marse! En he loves you jess like old Marse loved Mistiss. Everything she done was right; everything she say was Gospel; every time she come whar he was he look up en de sun come into his eyes! When he was dyin' and she went up to de bed, he look up at her and dat same light was shining! Heah, honey, heah!" She turned and hunting in a little cupboard in the corner, she brought forth an old Bible.

"This heah de Bible she give me! Put both your hands on it and be jined in love! 'Tain't nothin' else for you, Miss Page, but to take his love!"

She stretched forth the Bible.

Dave, with a flash of tears in his eyes, laid his hand upon it.

"Page!" he breathed in an awe-struck voice. She paused, advanced, laid her hand beside his, and their eyes met.

Old Martha, overcome by the scene and all she had been through, let go her hold on the Bible, staggered over to a little rush-bottomed chair, dropped in it and hid her face in her hands, sobbing.

A moment later, with her free hand, Page made a sign to Dave to leave.

He did so, and she sprang to the old woman and knelt down before her. "Look up, Aunt Martha," she said, "I am with you!"

CHAPTER XXIII

A SACRIFICE REVEALED

EXCEPT for some children and a few groups of men, who had remained to talk over the event of the day, Dave found the little street, when he stepped from Aunt Martha's porch, deserted. Peace had been restored, and all had turned to the routine of daily life. Smoke had begun to ascend from the low, dilapidated chimneys, the sound of the washtub and the well-bucket could be heard, and the aroma of boiling cabbage, frying bacon and baking corn bread was in the air.

Dave had many encounters and conversations when he reached the streets. He missed his dinner, and when he finally arrived home, darkness was coming on. He was greeted upon opening the front door with a faint sweet odor of pipe-smoke, and, as Uncle Ran never smoked, he knew there had been company.

He was passing by on his way to his room when his uncle, with a stern accent, in which he strove to conceal his weakness for the youth, called him.

This enforced severity on the part of his uncle always stirred Dave like a caress, and with a half smile and that alacrity with which he had been taught to obey his elders, he went immediately.

Taking his stand for a moment in the doorway, his mind teeming with the events of the day, his heart unusually light and full of hope concerning Page, it

seemed to him that the scene before him was one already stored away as a memory.

Uncle Ran, in his old, loose-fitting sack suit, powerful and serene, was seated in his ponderous armchair beside the table upon which was, apparently, the accumulation, in the way of books and papers, of years. For a moment he faced reality only as a part of the scene. He had been seeing Uncle Ran seated thus all his life, in the same attitude, backed by the same old wall where Launcelot was riding away from Guinivere through a forest of autumn leaves. Always Uncle Ran was seated here, always Launcelot was riding away, and always Guinivere was standing with bowed head, sad and demure.

Fresh from action, quickened by his own power as a speaker, the unchangeableness and calm monotony and all the things about his daily life for a moment staggered him. He put aside this feeling and entered.

"You've had an exciting day?" remarked Uncle Ran.

"I have," Dave smiled, taking his stand beside the table. "Who's been telling you?"

"Mr. Meredith! He was here this afternoon."

"Of Meredith and Freeland?" asked Dave quickly, as he took his seat.

"Yes. He has been hearing something from somebody—he said he heard you made a pretty fiery speech to the boys!"

"Well, I had to," Dave laughed, "with a pistol leveled at me by a half-drunken man; besides, I'm sure Sam is guiltless of this crime!" he added.

"So am I! Mr. Meredith is very much broken up over the death of Mr. Freeland."

"I can well understand that, sir," exclaimed Dave,

"they've been friends and colleagues many years."

"We had a long talk about old times and about Bob and his fine character. Bob Freeland was one of Nature's noblemen, if ever there was one, but what Mr. Meredith really came to see me about was yourself!"

"Me?" asked Dave, surprised.

"Yes, he said that he was getting old, needed new strength and brains and youth for the firm and wanted to know what I thought of the idea of Meredith and Lee!"

"Uncle Ran!" Dave had leaped to his feet.

"I told him I liked the idea very well. Sit down, son."

A flush sprang into Dave's face as he re-seated himself.

"Yes, Uncle Ran?"

"I think it will be arranged, Dave, if the idea appeals to you. He doesn't offer very much money in the beginning, but it's enough for you to live on and the rest is with you, Dave. When did you see Page?"

"I saw her to-day, Uncle Ran!"

"Well, now, I'm going to talk a little about myself."

He paused and Dave answered respectfully, "Yes, sir?"

After cutting off a piece of tobacco with an old pen-knife, rolling it in the palm of his hands and then placing it in his mouth, Uncle Ran replied:

"For a long time, Dave, I've been wanting to take old Hiram and go to the little farm my brother left me, in Amelia County. I want to get to the heart of nature once more and see if I can't feel," — Uncle Ran's smile was but the ghost of one, — "a boy again for the rest of my life. Some people have one passion, some another, and mine seems to be to get right in

among those seventeen oak trees that surround the little house and hear the acorns fall. Everything about those trees, from their just standing bare and leafless, to the time they put out their first leaves and on to acorn time, seems to have gotten on my mind. And the old well, and the spring at the foot of the hill — everything up there that was a part of my boyhood. I've been thinking about it, as I just said, for a long time."

Uncle Ran's voice grew a bit unsteady, and Dave thought his hand trembled. "I want to get to the country, my boy; I'm an old man; I want a few years there where I can just sit and think about old times. My work ended in this life to-day, Dave, and from now on, I want to be an onlooker of God's Virginia, not man's! The Richmond our fathers made doesn't exist any more for those like me,— hasn't since those d——n Yankees set foot here!"

The powerful old form lifted itself slowly, and Uncle Ran, somewhat resembling the old oaks his heart craved, rose to his feet.

"But I couldn't, you see," he said, "until you were launched."

Dave also arose, and for an instant they stood gazing into each other's eyes with passionate tenderness.

"Uncle Ran," Dave exclaimed in a clear but choking voice, "you've been living all these years for me!"

"Something like it, Dave."

CHAPTER XXIV

STRUGGLES IN NEW CONDITIONS

THE next few days the weather was rainy, a bit raw and chill — a cold June spell. But on the morning of Emily's wedding day it was altogether different — clear, with a strong fresh wind blowing.

June was well advanced, and Page arose at seven o'clock and, taking a hurried breakfast, started out to the market to secure the kind of flowers she needed to finish her decorations of the altar in the church, where the ceremony was to occur at twelve o'clock. She carried a large basket on her arm and wore her straw hat with the pink roses, and her sweet face was as fresh as the summer day she faced.

Her heart was sad for Emily going bravely to her doom, for Page felt it was that, and she had received, also the day before, a dismal letter from Fielding that had greatly affected her.

But Page, now that the marriage was a foregone conclusion, tried to cheer herself. A marriage was a marriage after all, and certainly Emily, from a financial standpoint, was doing well. 'Twas true Robert Hughes' father had been a butcher — Page winced at this — and Robert himself when a little chap had worn his little butcher's apron and helped his father around the stalls. But that was some years ago, and now Robert was at the head of the largest grocery store in Richmond and thoroughly respected. Everyone spoke well of Robert Hughes. "What a fine fellow," Page

consoled herself by thinking as she went along, "he had always been!" She tried to feel that she was very gay, and the effort brought the color to her cheeks and the sparkle to her eyes. She walked rapidly, glancing into the yards where people were busy with their flowers and up at the glistening trees and blue sky upon which white, billowy clouds were beginning to sail about restlessly.

The atmosphere was clear as yellow wine, and, as the day advanced, the breezes became soft and voluptuous. It was growing warm. The day reminded Page of one, long dead now, when she and David Lee, little strangers in the world — she scarcely seven — had looked out, and found it wondrous. Dave loved her then; he loved her now — his love had always been hers like a possession, a jewel, to be worn or not, as she liked. She indulged the new vision of him when he had saved Sam and felt new pride in him.

The scene that greeted her when she reached the market place was one dear to her eyes. She always looked upon it as one looks upon a shifting scene upon the stage. It was a moving scene, for the figures in it were mostly old, and they were rapidly drifting to what they called "the kingdom come."

They were the colored people from the country, old men and women, who came in before daylight each day, and took their places on the sidewalk outside the market proper with their wares. These wares consisted of flowers, mostly wild, tied in rude bunches with cotton strings, and onions and lettuce, and other vegetables. Here they stood around the market, some fat, some tall and lean, some decrepit, some gray-haired, and all, each one, grotesquely costumed. The bandanna turban could be seen on men and women, but not a

whole shoe among the lot. The women mostly wore gingham aprons and stood with hands clasped over their stomachs ready for a word, and especially ready for a joke, which pleased them all the better if a double-meaning was involved.

Page knew many of these good old souls, and not one ever failed to question her as to "when she was guine git married." Marriage in the eyes of these simple beings was the all important event of a lady's life, the pivot upon which all turned. The men invariably complimented her. They told her she "sure was growin' pretty," or she was "jess like her ma, the beautifullest creature what ever drew breath," and sometimes Page, who loved all tales of the past, would stop to listen, and they entertained her with not only interesting, but beautiful stories. They invariably contrasted the present unfavorably with the past and the pathetic expressions in some of the fine old faces, rapidly growing careworn, was most touching.

These poor redeemed savages were not ambitious, and attached little importance to what they had to sell; they expected to make only a few pennies, which they would invest at sundown in bacon, a little sugar and coffee, and start forth to reach home by bed-time. Some of them came ten miles on foot, thinking nothing of the journey, and others came in some kind of an old wagon, with a broken-down horse that never went out of a walk.

The picture of them vanishing into the night, taking various roads to their many little cabins built all about in woods, often rose before Page, and she would stand among them wondering what kind of markets in later years would be in Richmond, and what kind of buildings would be on the spot where to-day these dear old

souls congregated with their fruits and berries or simple wild flowers to make a little money to keep body and soul together, and to chat and gossip among themselves or with the whites. To her it seemed they were very interesting, for she knew when they were gone there would be no more like them in Richmond or on the face of the earth.

Page bought the flowers and was starting to the church when she ran into an old friend. As they approached each other a flush rose to his face, and he looked across the street, and had she not called out to him, he would have passed her without speaking.

"Well!" Page exclaimed, "is this how you are going to pass me by?"

He stopped; the flush had faded; he was pale and tears gushed to his eyes. He took her outstretched hand in a sharp grasp. "Miss Page," he said, his voice faltering, "I did not know whether you were going to speak to me or not. Many of the young ladies have cut me."

"Ned!" Page exclaimed, and her own eyes filled. Poor, brave, handsome fellow, he had come near starvation last year and had accepted a position as principal of a public school, a *negro* public school for boys.

"Do you think I don't hate it?" he burst out, brushing the back of his hand across his eyes.

They walked on, both silent, and before they had gone many blocks, two people had turned their heads so as not to see him. He was terribly in disgrace, was this gallant young Southerner. Finally he spoke and told Page excitedly all about it. How the place had been offered him, how he had indignantly refused it, and went home and found his mother hungry, and how he had got down on his knees before he went to bed that

night and prayed to God to tell him what to do in the matter. "And Miss Page," he continued, "as surely as you and I are alive to-day, God told me to do this thing, and I'm going to do it as long as I can hold my job and do my duty by the niggers, too!"

"I know you are, Ned!" Page answered in a choked voice.

"It's awful, though," he went on, "apart from what I'm going through socially, it's awful. You can't conceive of the density of those little skulls. I sometimes think I've got to take a hammer and crack them open to get A B C into their heads."

"Oh, Ned, and what's the use?" Page asked dolefully.

"Not a bit, and that's the worst of it; that's what makes it so hard to take interest in the task and to do it seriously and honestly. My heart isn't in it. I know if they ever learn anything, which, thank God, I don't think they will, it will only make bigger fools of them."

"What does Fanny say?" Page questioned cautiously.

"That's the worst of it; she can't forgive it!"

"I can't believe it of Fanny!" Fanny and Ned had always been "engaged" ever since Page could remember.

"Oh, I don't blame her," broke forth the man. "Her father and brothers influence her. She doesn't dare stand up for me. Why, I haven't seen her in four weeks, Miss Page."

"You're a brave fellow, Ned!"

He laughed a little. "I don't believe I am," he said. "I think I must be a coward, otherwise I wouldn't suffer so. Why, it's worse than facing the Yankees to

walk down Main street, where most of my friends and my father's friends hold me in contempt."

"I am going to see Fanny and give her a piece of my mind!" exclaimed Page.

"No, don't do that, Miss Page, but tell her that I'm suffering, and tell her not to forget that I did it for mother. That isn't exactly a manly appeal, but it's true, and I've got a right to say it to her."

"I know she loves you, Ned."

"I know it too, Miss Page."

"And she's suffering!"

"Of course, but it was between her and mother. I did what I thought was right. Why, Miss Page, mother's health was failing. For a long time she hadn't had proper food! What else *could* I do?"

"You did just right!"

"Thank you; you're the first person I have opened my lips to on the subject. Good-by, and God bless you, Miss Page. Go and see mother, won't you?"

"I will!"

He turned and left her and walked down the street, his head bowed in thought, and there came into Page's mind that in some respects he and she were in the same boat. He had taken advantage of the new opportunities that offered for an independent existence: her desire to go to New York had the same end in view. Suppose she took this step, would the people cut her as they had cut Ned?

The thought frightened her, and she finally came to the conclusion that no one willed things; Richmond itself and all the inhabitants were sailing along as though moved by some invisible mechanism. She planted her feet firmly on the sidewalk, experiencing a sense of relief that it remained intact and solid.

CHAPTER XXV

A MOCK CEREMONY

By half-past eleven o'clock the church was crowded and the buzz of voices suppressed but animated was most audible.

The church had been charmingly decorated by Page and a host of Emily's girl friends and nothing was wanting to add loveliness to the old altar where Emily was to be sacrificed.

There were no sad faces, even though there might have been sad hearts, at this festival. All was sunshine, brightness, and beauty. The women wore flowers on their simple gowns and the men had them pinned in their button-holes. Flowers did service for everything.

There were to be no bridesmaids, a simple traveling suit, although Emily was not going traveling, having been decided upon as the most inexpensive. She was to appear in a mauve colored cashmere with a straw hat covered in white flowers and everybody knew it, also, that she was to "carry" camelias.

Page, with a beautiful flush on her face as she passed Dave in the lobby, walked quickly down the center aisle and took the seat reserved for her near the front. Aunt Constance, in a lavender silk that had performed service during the war and was as well known as her delicate face, and with her hands covered with a pair of much darned silk mitts, had already arrived and the two instantly commenced a whispered

conversation. Page spread out her dress and placed her bouquet on it to save a seat for her Cousin Betty who finally appeared, lively enough and quite excited.

"I saw Fielding outside," she whispered as she took her seat. "He looked like Edwin Booth in *Hamlet*, poor fellow."

"He is indeed the melancholy Dane, to-day," exclaimed Page. "I saw him too and my heart went out to him. Fielding has always been my favorite cousin."

"Oh! That's because he's the handsomest!" Cousin Betty laughed.

"What a beautiful day it is," whispered Aunt Constance, but a little shadow of unrest fell upon her features as she added, "but these caressing days in June are always the precursors of storms and it is so in other things. Everything so far about Emily's wedding is passing off beautifully, and yet I feel an unaccountable dread in my heart as though something terrible were going to happen."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Cousin Betty, "no trouble will come to Emily. She'll accept things as her mother does — she's trained to believe that the word husband means all that is right. You will see!"

There was a sudden commotion at the door now and whispers of "the bride" were exchanged. But it was a false alarm and quite another wait ensued.

But at last the wedding march really burst forth and Emily appeared at the entrance to the aisle leaning on her father's arm. The groom, whose florid face was pathetically white and whose stout body was tragically rigid, made his appearance from the rector's study and took his stand at the altar. His new clothes glared out on him like fresh paint; his shoes

creaked audibly and his hands seemed bursting out of his white kid gloves.

Emily was pale, too, very pale, and sweet and tender, as she went forward to lay her small hand in the one bursting from its glove.

She was not pale when she came out after the ceremony. Two round scarlet spots the size of silver dollars burned in her cheeks. A hush had fallen on the entire congregation and all peered curiously into the young face as it passed them. What thoughts and feelings had burned those red spots in her cheeks? Each one tried to enter her mind and find out.

The gas had burned brightly in the darkened church but outside was the broad daylight. All the effects of light and shade came out vividly.

Fielding, who had not witnessed the ceremony, was standing on the curb. He saw the red spots in Emily's cheeks, and she saw his sunken, haggard eyes. One swift glance passed between them; then they drove her away.

The day had continued to grow beautiful. All the trees were swaying gently and rustling. The sky was a soft gray, and upon it billowy white clouds continued to take majestic shapes. The atmosphere was still like yellow wine, and the grass of such a vivid green that it seemed about to sparkle.

It had been arranged that the family and a few near relatives were to assemble at Emily's new home for a kind of luncheon. They were all going there now, there to the little new house where everything was vulgarly new, except the old gifts that would stand out pained and insulted by their surroundings. Every one was realizing vaguely that Emily would be there in the midst of the first new things she had

ever known, and be it confessed some few envied those that would arrive from the new grocery store.

"I hope it will be for the best," said Aunt Constance, as she and Page sauntered along under Aunt Constance's old sun umbrella, each division of which was embroidered by fine little pin holes, "but I have my doubts."

"Doubts!" exclaimed Page bitterly. "There are no doubts in my mind about her unhappiness. And did you see poor Fielding's eyes?"

"Yes," said Aunt Constance, "I did."

CHAPTER XXVI

DESPERATE CHIVALRY

ALL day Fielding Peyton roamed the streets.

Several times, a thing most unusual for him, he entered a saloon and threw down a large drink of whisky. Once he leaned for over an hour on the bar listening absently to the conversations going on and watching with a vacant stare those who came and went. He did this mechanically, experiencing no physical reminders. It was as though his spirit were wandering aimlessly about. He did not seem to be suffering but only to be experiencing absent-mindedness. He could not remember whom he had seen or whether he had spoken to people. He ate nothing.

His mind was confused. He was not thinking of Emily, but of all the things that had led up to to-day's happenings.

A vast and mighty canvas swam before his eyes that was like the heavens without a cloud and upon it was painted in terrible strokes and fierce colors all the tragic events of twenty years. He gazed upon this powerful drama fascinated. He not only saw the terrific contour but horrifying details.

One picture followed another in rapid succession. First the war with all its bloody horrors rolled before him. He saw armies traveling slowly or traveling quickly, their bayonets flashing in the sunlight, or dull beneath a leaden sky. Then he saw these armies stationary in the moonlight or half lost to sight

in the blackness of a night unlit by moon or stars. He saw rain descending upon them, or snow, or fierce hail, but worst of all the heat of the sun which also descended in streams. He saw pine forests riddled with bullets and the ground soaked in blood, above which floated flags tattered and gory. He saw the shadowy forms of men and horses; the men lying on their faces or with faces turned upwards; the horses in grotesque positions, their heads stretched out in the agony of death or their stiff legs pointing hideously upwards.

Then these scenes would recede and he would see only bare, uncultivated, grayish fields where desolation reigned.

Once it seemed to him that women's white faces appeared upon one of these bare fields and bloomed upon it close to the earth like pallid flowers. He saw in another picture the period that followed the war, all the stagnation, inactivity, desolation, and awful poverty. He saw the infamy that sprang up and the struggle of his people to live under an oppression and insolence worse than war because there was no heroism to uphold them.

He saw all these things intensified as though under a strong light because of one thing—he loved a woman and that woman was one of the victims of what this kaleidoscopic picture had revealed.

Sharp realizations came to him keenly for the first time, realizations that had been accepted as the dumb, persecuted, overdriven animal accepts the lash. With a pang that was like the cutting of the bullet through flesh, he understood that in the South a real slavery had begun—the traffic in white women. These women who had always married for love were being

sold, or, were selling themselves, for bread. His love had been sold in the face and in the name of God. She in whose veins flowed the refinement of generations, she whose heart was gentle, whose flesh was tender, whose ears had never heard a coarse word, whose eyes had never looked upon a coarse scene, had been sold to a brute to do with as he would. He saw her helplessness; her bitter tears in the silent hours of the night. He heard her smothered cries of terror and fear and he saw no war in her cause and that no man protected her.

For a while his mind dwelt upon current things.

Daily the papers were full of the horrors of negroes being burnt at the stake. These horrors and agonies flashed by the telegraph thousands of miles, caused shivers to pass through millions of people. Emily was to be burnt at the stake and he was not preventing it.

Emily herself appeared in the picture with laughter on her lips, as though to mock him. She wore a wreath of wild flowers in her hair as he had seen her one day standing beside a brook in the dense woods. Many pictures of her appeared after this one and always, as though to torture him, she was laughing. Even when the picture presented showed her folded fast in his arms, her head was bent back and she was laughing in his face. His whole frame trembled at that maddening, joyous countenance wreathed in smiles. There had been no smile in Emily's face to-day when her frightened eyes met his for an instant — what he read there was childish terror and piteous appeal as they whirled her away, seated beside the grotesque creature who had bought her.

When it was dark, he found that he had wandered

to the place where the sacrifice of Emily was to be completed. The image vanished but the actual scene was even more like a picture, and had, to his feverish gaze, less reality.

There was a small tree directly in front of the house. This tree recently set out was quite as new as the house itself and its slender body was protected by a delicate framework painted a pale bizarre green.

Fielding took his stand beneath the young tree and began to watch the house, at first absently, as had been his wont all day, but after a while eagerly, with morbid interest, as though it was a phantom that would soon vanish before his gaze.

It was a small brick house only two stories high and two rooms deep. The bricks of which it was composed were of a vivid red, separated by glaring streaks of white and a narrow porch or veranda painted white extended across the entire lower floor. The parlor windows opened out on this porch.

The light from an old street lamp on the opposite corner shone directly through the slender tree under which Fielding stood and cast trembling shadows of its leaves upon the house.

The scenes that Fielding had been witnessing all day were masterpieces of art — what he saw now — seemed to be gazing upon — was a vulgar little chromo. Gradually the details stood out. The parlor windows had been left open but the second story ones were closed and the cheap white shades, against which a dim light shone, were down. The parlor was dark but the dining-room beyond was brightly lighted and through the open folding-doors Fielding could see the entire room distinctly. What was going on was vivid and bright like the well-lighted stage of a

theater. Emily was not present. A colored girl was setting the table and he who was to perform the rites of Emily's sacrifice — lay the delicate flesh upon the burning coals, was standing with his compact back to the parlor looking out of a rear window.

For hours, it seemed to Fielding, that this scene, the colored girl setting the table and the man looking out of the window, was before his eyes.

Finally a little bell tinkled and a moment later Emily entered timidly, cautiously rather, and, as the man at the window turned, Fielding started.

Emily had changed her dress to a simple white muslin. Her face was as pale as a camelia lying on a coffin. She seemed during the day to have grown thin to emaciation and her dress hung upon her limply. On closer scrutiny her blanched features seemed to Fielding those of a dead child. She walked slowly towards the table and took her seat at the head as one who is seating herself for the first time before a prison meal. The man took his seat opposite and the colored girl commenced serving the supper. Emily ate little and toyed with the spoon in her saucer while her husband, who appeared to be hungry, ate heartily of the steak that he had cut knowingly and with understanding of its tenderest parts with a flashing new carving knife — a wedding present — and of the light rolls and batter-bread. Three times Emily poured tea for him and then sat waiting. Sometimes she looked straight ahead of her and it seemed to Fielding that their eyes met, but she would turn them absently away and look startled to one side of her. When the servant left the room he noticed that her eyes followed her supplicatingly.

When supper was over, her husband approached

her and leaning over attempted to kiss her. She sprang to her feet and faced him furiously, like a young animal that had been attacked, her eyes full of defiance.

Fielding, whose own eyes seemed suddenly to become streams of light that touched the objects they rested upon, stared at the man whose gaze of helpless astonishment was fixed upon Emily.

His appearance filled him with disgust. He was a blond man, not tall, and of a solid stout build. Fielding suddenly remembered that his mother was a German woman and how her red cheeks had made an impression on his childish mind. Her son was like her and wore his flaxen hair, the color of her own, in pompadour style. The face was coarse but not homely and the blue eyes were honest and sincere. The mouth and teeth were almost fine. The defect lay in the nose that was rather short and twisted to one side. It was altogether a kind face with honesty of purpose written plainly upon it. It revealed the character of a man who could never rise to great heights but who could never fall to low depths, a man who would always be able to help others by helping himself. A self-reliant man who expected that others would lean on him. He was prepared to allow Emily's whole family to lean on him. There was no more comfortable woman in Richmond than his mother. And so, Robert was a man, self-made, but a man.

But Fielding saw none of this. He saw the butcher boy who had developed into a brute with the power to slay a virgin. To his excited gaze the face of the man as he stared into it grew to enormous proportions. Then the body grew until it vanished and be-

came a grotesque figure that threatened horror and injustice to a conquered aristocracy — a thing that had made its way among them and to whom inch by inch they were yielding; a thing that could supply food and raiment and shelter to the down-trodden and the overcome and in return become a devourer and destroyer of what it had sheltered.

Finally Emily again mechanically seated herself at the table. The man seated himself, too, while the colored girl cleared away the dishes.

Fielding did not move. He stood like one petrified and never shifted his gaze.

Suddenly all the agony that his brain had experienced began to attack his body. Pains shot through his head, his limbs ached and for an instant his sight failed him so that he was seized with alarm lest he could no longer see through the window. He tried to clear his vision that he might behold Emily, as it were, for the last time — fix her forever in his brain. He took in her smooth brown hair, recalling vividly that once in a sharp wind when she was dashing through the woods with him on horseback it had tumbled down and enveloped her. He noted the clear eyes that had laughed or swam in tears, the little nose cut as no other nose ever was with its charming sensitive nostrils; the deep cleft in the upper lip; the lips themselves curved and inviting that over and over had yielded to his; the voluptuous throat; the young over-ripe bosom; the smooth body with skin of satin, the whole tender virgin whom God had created for him and who had been torn from him to be made a living sacrifice of. His throat ached to bursting and suddenly he was carried away by rage.

To him that creature waiting to possess her, with

his brute-like tendencies and lack of imagination, was no more capable of love than the beast of the field. The most that Emily could become to him, after the first abandonment, was a habit—a recreation, like the habitual Sunday feast eaten by the dull glutton. And this creature would daily be at her side! He would hear her sighs, see her tears, their very breaths would mingle and he himself would follow his mule through the broiling sun and stand alone at night contemplating all this, while the world slept beneath distant stars.

He was so changed, as these thoughts chased through his mind, that an acquaintance in passing might not have recognized him. He put his face convulsively in his hands as if to shut out the vision, grown unbearable, but immediately withdrew them and gazed again.

Meanwhile the night was growing intensely black. Heavy clouds were hurrying together as with a distinct purpose, that of effacing the moon, and the little tree that had fluttered so gayly became silent and immovable as if awestruck. Momently it grew closer as though rain would soon fall, and as Fielding drew himself up in an effort to breathe more freely he wished for a clap of thunder that would relieve the intense pressure that he felt upon him and clear his head.

It did not come and the oppression in the atmosphere increased. Once he feared that he was suffocating and tugged at his collar. As this fear of death took possession of him a new idea occurred to him. He realized that if he died this moment in the throes of a great anguish he would never have realized one hour of unalloyed happiness in his entire life. He

felt with poignant bitterness that he was one whom God had ordained for a martyr.

Great tears gathered in his hot staring eyes and streamed down his cheeks. He was like one standing in the center of a mystic dream, on all sides of him scenes of horror and beyond the dream visions of a lost heaven.

Then he saw Emily again, not as she was there before him defiantly protecting herself, but as she would be when the time came for her to be overcome and to yield herself patiently as to a religious rite. The pale face, the divine form, the little passive hands, one with its heavy circlet of gold, all rose before him. And then he beheld the violent amorousness of the man. He thought of the storms careering through the burly body, the passionate trembling, the kisses pressed in delirium upon her lips.

Suddenly in the midst of these turbulent thoughts Emily, as though commanded, rose to her feet in an absent minded way, and the man approached her and laid his hands firmly on her shoulders. She no longer resisted, her form relaxed, her head lowered. She was listening. He spoke a long while and when he was through he took his hands from her shoulders and she turned from him and left the room walking like a somnambulist.

Robert Hughes remained motionless, his eyes fastened upon the door through which she had passed. Presently he went hurriedly to the door but returned to the spot he had left and remained still some moments.

Fielding thought he could hear the beating of his heart. He strained forward as if to listen but the man had changed his position and was looking at his

watch. Then he sat down and Fielding experienced an instant's relief. But almost immediately he rose and went over to the mantel-piece and toyed with some *bric-a-brac*. Then he looked at his watch again and with a decisive turn of his sturdy body he went over quickly to the rear windows, lowered them and fastened the catches.

Fielding again put his hand over his heart that was throbbing beneath the burning flesh. They were being shut in together with the doors and windows locked! Again the blood rushed to his brain so that he could not see.

When his sight returned the entire scene, except the man — a man now, not an idea — had vanished. He saw only him, a creature in a blinding light, bent upon a crime as fierce in his eyes and as black as the one for which they burned negroes at the stake.

In another instant with the quick, nervous movements of a panther he had leaped through the open parlor window and the next instant his left hand, with its long sinewy fingers, was around his rival's throat. In a flash with his right hand he grasped the glittering new carving knife that lay on the table beside him and raising it aloft, while his crazed eyes glared into the bulging ones of his victim, he plunged it into his heart!

For moments they stood thus, then finally he released his hold and the monster of his dream,— the dream that had maddened him into a murderer,— lay at his feet. The fall was heavy — a dull thud that rattled the china and shook the small house.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LIGHTNING STRIKES

WHILE this scene was being enacted, Page, her mind filled with the events of the day, was seated beside the window of her little room looking out. Seeing the terrified condition of Emily when they reached Robert Hughes's house; watching the deathlike pallor that spread over her features when they literally tore her mother from her arms; feeling the clinging of those suddenly fiercely strong arms about herself as Emily had begged her not to leave, had all had a most depressing effect upon her. She went to bed early but these thoughts and a certain intense oppression in the atmosphere prevented her sleeping.

She seemed never to have seen such a night. The sky, dark, turbulent, and threatening, was close to the earth and the moon of a pale bluish color appeared and disappeared through the ragged clouds, reminding one of the startled face of a terrified fleeing woman. Through the entire city, beneath this convulsed canopy, there was the quiet of the vanquished town and the stagnation and ruin seemed to settle upon Page. There was suffocation as if material things were stifling and ready to burst forth into activity.

Her mental eye roamed over this inertness through all the familiar streets. She saw the closed factories, vacant stores, and vacant lots; she saw the broken window-panes of the vacant stores and the gray griminess of those that were occupied; she saw the dust settling on the dull fading paint of the houses and

palings of the fences and the negroes, whose care and pride these things had been, abandoned to idleness and depravity. Even the River, not called upon to do much in the way of transportation, rolled on tranquilly and aimlessly, red and sullen, an eternal reminder of all the blood that had flowed.

In this emptiness and inert repose Page heard no voice of hope; it was as though death were stealing silently about to finally overcome all things.

Suddenly a breath of wind brought to her nostrils the passionate odor of magnolia blossoms and to her ears faint strains of music, and of male voices singing. Somewhere, very near, some one was being serenaded. A slight feeling of relief came to Page and, remaining perfectly still, she consciously breathed in the odor of the majestic flower and listened eagerly to the singing. How rich and melodious the quartette of voices sounded pouring forth the melody of an old song, and what a sweet custom this of lovers awakening their sweethearts with beautiful love-songs. Page knew she would never forget the serenades that she had had and felt in her heart that, in spite of Dave and all opposition, there was a possibility that she would some day be away from these gentle serenades. She wished that they would come under her window and serenade her.

The fact was that her heart was aching acutely for both Fielding and Emily, and she longed for the music that it might, in a way, rest her, even that it might bring tears to her dry wide-open eyes. As though in answer to her wish the quartette soon appeared in sight and when they reached the house they stopped under the old weeping willow, and, after a pause, sang several sweet old songs.

There was a certain etiquette observed in these serenades that, after the third song had been sung, required the one serenaded to throw something, usually a glove, from the window. Page had but one pair of white gloves. They had done service at a good many entertainments and were booked to do service at many more, but, resolving to pretend at the next party that she had lost one she rummaged among the few possessions in her top drawer and finding the pair threw one out.

It caught, as she could see, in the sudden flaring out of the moon through the still agitated clouds, in a lower limb of the old willow and they all sprang for it. But the possessor of it remained a mystery.

When the last echoes of the final song had died away, the singers left quietly and Page remained looking out and thinking.

In spite of herself she continued to feel oppressed. The night had grown a little cooler, but there were momentary periods of intense heat between the timid gusts of breeze. The sweetness of other flowers than the magnolia reached her and it seemed to her that their effort to be in full bloom by the morrow was a deliciously appealing struggle. What a relief it would be when the night was over and the sun would rise in splendor over all!

After a time the sound of wheels arrested her attention. A vehicle was coming down the street. This was a rare occurrence in this quiet side street and Page looked out. As it gradually approached she saw an open hack in which a man was seated. To her astonishment the carriage was driven up to her own door and stopped.

The man looked up and, in the uncertain gloom,

she instantly recognized Dave. Her heart leaped into her throat and without waiting to consider, she threw on a wrapper and flew down the steps and flung open the front door.

Dave was standing on the porch and the sight of his face made her quail.

"Dave," she exclaimed breathlessly, "in God's name what is it — what has happened?"

"Page," he answered in a husky voice, "go upstairs and dress as quickly as you can; you must go to Emily!"

"Emily?"

"Yes!"

"Dave! You look so strange — what is it? What has happened?"

He took her by the arm to steady her. "Prepare yourself for an awful shock: Fielding has murdered Robert Hughes!"

"Fielding! Robert Hughes! Oh! My God!" She fell back but Dave caught her. "When? Where?" she gasped.

"There, at the home! Emily does not want her parents told until to-morrow! She wants you. Collect yourself — you must go to her!"

Without a word, stunned as by a blow, Page turned from him, and entering the house staggering, pulled herself up the steps holding on to the banisters.

She dressed herself with nervous, trembling hands, and had difficulty finding things. Then she descended and they entered the hack and were driven rapidly away, the wheels of the old vehicle making a loud noise that resounded curiously on the stillness of the night.

They found Emily upstairs seated on the floor, her

head buried in the lap of the mulatto girl. She sprang to her feet and faced them.

"Page!" she cried, "he did it! Fielding is a murderer!" Then she screamed and Page went forward and folded her in a fierce embrace.

"Stop, Emily! Stop! My darling Emily, don't scream like that again. I am here — Page is with you!"

And holding to the girl she too burst into sobs.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BEYOND HIS TENSION

Two hours later Page, in appearance as much of a ghost as Emily herself, descended the stairs softly and confronted Dave, seated upright in one of Robert Hughes's new chairs, staring straight before him.

Coroners, policemen, doctors had all vanished. Every trace of the tragedy had disappeared and all that remained was the little new home that Robert Hughes had prepared for his bride.

"Well?" Dave asked, rising quickly as though another tragedy might be at hand.

"She is asleep — I gave her the limit of the prescription: I *had* to make her sleep. For the time, thank God, she is dead to it all. She seemed conscious of but one thing. Over and over she repeated those words, 'Fielding is a murderer!' It is as though she had forgotten everything else — father, mother, Robert Hughes, the wedding, everything — only those words, 'Fielding is a murderer!' I think she repeated them a hundred times!"

Turning quickly from her, Dave entered the adjoining room, poured out a glass of sherry and returning handed it to her. "Here," he said, "drink this — all the strength has gone out of you!"

She drank the wine eagerly, returned him the glass, and soon a little color crept into her cheeks.

"You are right, the strength has gone out of me — the strength to stand any more! This decides me —

I'm going away! I can't stand it! I can't, I can't!" He started to speak but she raised her hands and stopped him. "I can't, I tell you," she repeated. "Every hour it's something! Think of Sam the other day! Suppose you had not been there! Think of that pistol leveled at you and think," her eyes traveled about in horror, "of this! 'Fielding is a murderer!' I will hear those words as long as I live!" She took an excited step forward. "Do you know what I said to Emily? I denied it! Fielding isn't a murderer, I told her, but an avenger! He has washed his hands in blood, but in doing so he has been an instrument chosen by God to prevent the murder of your purity and innocence, to save Robert Hughes from worse than murder!"

As she ceased to speak, ceased flinging out the impassioned words, the very room seemed to vibrate with her voice, and Dave's heart sank into his breast. He knew Page, her impressionability, and what this occurrence meant to her. Oppressed as he was himself, horror-struck by the tragedy, broken-hearted at the fate of his dearest friend, the friend dearer to him he felt than his very self, it seemed to him that effort, opposition, were useless; that in spite of him the tide of events would sweep Page along into other channels and that he would sit still and, as he had done the two past hours, be a passive onlooker. A great sense of weariness overcame him. Perhaps Page was right. For a moment he stood before her fixed to the spot, dumb, mute, like a being tied hand and foot, who has given up and ceased to struggle. And all the while the innate sadness of his countenance, the sadness that the faces of his people bore, the universal sadness of his time, was deepening from

shadow to cloud. Page saw this, this look of passionate hopelessness, and while it stung and rebuked her she quickly fortified herself against it.

"I am going away!" she flung out desperately.

"Yes," Dave answered absently and speaking as one aroused from deep sleep, "I know." He looked into her face with the expression of one beyond contention. In his voice, when he spoke again, there was even a trace of sympathy, tenderness, as though he had been won over and was taking her part. "I understand—this tragedy has been too much for you; I understand."

He went over to the chair he had vacated when she came in and taking his seat in it buried his face in his hands.

The silence became sepulchral, oppressive. The moon, escaped again from the battle with clouds, was pouring in through one window, the window through which Fielding had leaped to his doom, and was lying in a patch on the floor. Page stared at this patch of pale light. Then she heard a sound upstairs, started slightly and listened. It was the faithful mulatto girl she had left by Emily's bedside, moving softly about the room. In a moment all was quiet again.

She stood still, staring before her at nothing, her wide-open eyes looking into vacancy, her mind struggling to get possession of all the sorrow and misery that she was using to fortify herself in her final determination.

Then Dave looked up and their eyes met. Page felt herself start again and attempted to control a nervousness that responded to every sound and glance. She tried shifting her gaze from Dave's,

but a strange gleam was in his eyes, that held it.

He rose to his feet and it seemed to Page she had never seen him tall like this, never realized his height. He towered above her breast, shoulders and head. He was dark with a velvety midnight darkness that suggested that the bursting of a human thunderstorm was imminent.

"Page," he exclaimed, the scorn in his voice cutting the silence like the cut of a sharp knife, "you are not the first traitor!"

"Traitor!"

"Yes," he approached a step, "traitor, coward, deserter — I call you what you are!"

"Dave! How do you dare apply such words to me?"

"Because they fit you!"

The gleam in his eyes changed to fire; it was the first stroke of lightning. It struck and scorched her and she quailed under it.

"Am I not right?" he asked. "Is not what I say true? You want to go away! Why? Because you want to escape the misery, the despair, the poverty, the danger if you will, that you stand in the midst of! Such beings we call traitors! In our war, when a youth, whose temperament possibly corresponding to yours was overcome by, God knows what, for man can never realize true battle, with its death cries, its awful din, its flashing of bayonets, its distant roar of cannon, its deafening exploding of shell, its sharp repeated rifle shots, its threats, yells, smothered and uttered oaths, its mad orders, blowing of horns, a hundred murders in one moment, blood flowing, horrible wound gapings, dying shrieks — when such a youth, sensitive, terrified, overcome beyond

endurance, fled, no excuse was made for him—he was called a coward, a deserter, a traitor—caught, humiliated, reviled before his comrades, made an example of and shot! What are *you* fleeing from? Your army in distress—your stricken army in whose hearts and souls rebellion is raging and who at times commit desperate deeds such as Fielding has committed! I repeat—I call you what you are, a traitor!”

“Dave!” She staggered up and caught him by the arm.

He freed himself. “No, let me speak! Do you know what I found out just now when you entered this room? I found out that you did not love me, never had loved me, perhaps never could love me or any one! What does a woman do, in a crisis like this, who loves a man? What, in spite of *everything*, does she do? She flies into his arms! What did you do! Declared your intention to run away! The love that you confessed on that old porch at Fielding’s that night was a passing emotion wrung out of your jealousy! It no doubt gave you pleasure. All you want is emotion—new emotions! That’s what you are stretching out to! New schemes that they may furnish you with new emotions! But love! You do not know the meaning of the word! I see it all as clear as day now, for I repeat, if you had loved me when you entered that door you would have rushed into my arms, that instinctively moved to open to you, when I heard your step! Instead I am greeted with the old cry that once too often has sickened my hearing—you are going away! Ah! It still sickens me! Why did you lay your hand on that sacred Bible the other day? The action was a lie!”

"Dave!"

He threw her from him and again his scorn cut the air. "It probably furnished you with an emotion!"

She caught his arm again. "Dave! Listen to me — you must!"

"No, I won't listen to you!" He wrenched his arm free. "You will listen to *me*! From this moment I will never again plead my own cause, either in your or my own behalf. If you want to go away — go! If you can't stand conditions here, leave them! A while ago I was afraid of you — I almost joined hands with you — but in one instant that weakness passed, and I tell you now if you want to go — go!"

He paused, expecting her to speak, but silenced to muteness she merely remained gazing at him out of horror-struck eyes, and he went on: "As for me I will remain here, true to my birthright; clinging to my sentiments and ideals, though murder be rampant!"

She flung up her head and her voice rang out in triumph. "And it's just such sentiments as these that cause the tragedies that are driving me away — just such madness!"

He leaned over and peered into her eyes. "And as surely as you live these sentiments — this madness will call you back! Go to New York, plunge into all the gayety there, and with the lights of the city blinding you, its roar deafening you, they will call you back! In the dark hours of the night they will call you back; from your seat in the theater they will call you back; from the wealth squandered before your eyes they will call you back! And more! My love

will call you back! Though all the princes and potentates of the world bow before you, laying their hearts at your feet, the love of *my* heart will oust them all and call you back! Pray God, Page, it may not be too late! Go!" he pointed upwards, "to that stricken child!"

Her form shrunk and without a word she turned and obeyed him.

CHAPTER XXIX

VISIONS OF THE OLD AND NEW

THE following morning Emily's father and mother arrived in Martin's old hack, and took Emily home. Page accompanied them, seated on the front seat beside Emily, holding one of her hands.

Emily was surprisingly quiet, but already her youth and bloom seemed to have vanished. The little form was a rack that her clothes drooped on; the colorless lips had lost their beauty lines and drooped like her clothing; her eyes were those of a starved animal. A long crepe veil that had belonged to Emily's grandmother had been brought by her mother and Emily was entirely hidden beneath it. The smell of this old veil, that had been packed in camphor, sickened Page and as the carriage moved slowly along, visions of Emily's future rose before her. Sunday after Sunday Emily would wear this historic veil, saturated with the tragedies of broken hearts, to church and sit with folded hands beneath it. And she would take up her daily life in the household to grow into such an old maid as Page was only too familiar with, the kind that used to frighten her when she was a child. Her awful message to Fielding, that his atonement to God would be never to look upon her face again, had declared her future.

Later in the day Page left her to go to Aunt Constance whom she feared the tragedy had prostrated. On her way, she walked, apparently without any in-

tention on her part, to the real estate office and completed the formalities for the sale of her house.

To Page's relief, Mrs. Bartlett, whom she also stopped by to see, accepted the news as a relief and confessed to Page that for some time she had been partially packed, ready to move. She declared that since the death of Sadie May she had found the place unendurable on account of reminders of her at every turn.

She parted from Page with a burst of feeling to which Page, in spite of her benumbed feeling, partly responded.

"Mrs. Bartlett," she cried, "as long as I live I will never forget how kind you have been to me ever since we have lived under this little roof together!"

Mrs. Bartlett's shining eyes overflowed with tears.

"Thank you, Miss Page," she said, "and if you do go away, if you feel you've got to go, will you sometimes think of Sadie May?" The pressure tightened on Page's hands. "You won't forget her, will you? I want everybody that lived in this house," the tears were streaming now, "to remember her."

"Never, Mrs. Bartlett," Page cried. "I promise you never to forget Sadie May!"

As she passed out of the house her mind reverted to Dave and their last talk on the little hard sofa. How many things had happened since that night. It might be a hundred years ago!

While Page was pondering upon these things, Dave, having parted from his lifelong friend in his prison cell, was walking thoughtfully towards his home.

For the first time in his life he felt he had been called upon by the Stage Director of the world to play a part. He had accepted the offer from Mr.

Meredith to enter into partnership with him, and on the strength of it had told Fielding he would take his case.

There was a slight flush on his pale face as he strode eagerly through the streets that the cloudless sun, in a pale blue sky, was lighting up with an almost golden light. He was so excited that the world about him, the bright yellow glow, the delicately green trees, and the old faded homes seemed to him a fantastical display in which he had suddenly found himself. He was still alive with the interview that in its tragic intensity had gripped hard at his brain and heart. The narrow walls of the cell still crushed him, the yellow patch of sunlight that came across Fielding's head like a blazing sword and then shone like a false jewel in a rough setting on the whitewashed wall, still blinded him.

Fielding's appearance, that had at first shocked him almost to speechlessness, remained with him. He was like a startling apparition. Not twenty-four hours had passed since he had unconsciously committed an awful crime, yet he was but a mocking echo of himself. His hair, the day before black as a raven's wing, was sprinkled with gray; his dark eyes burned in their sockets, a dull red, and his tall angular frame, thin always, was barely more than a skeleton. The hands that reached out from this weird wreck and clutched convulsively at him, were like two burning hooks. What was left of him was the old languid grace that betrayed itself in every movement.

A murderer who moved like a god was a pathetic spectacle. All this confronted Dave, wrenched his body and quickened his heart beats. But so strange is the working of the human brain in moments of

great stress, always straying from the immediate objects that affect it to more distant ones, that it was of himself he was thinking and how a man is led unconsciously, even against his own will, to assume his part in the world. He tried to arouse himself; to make familiar objects have familiar aspects, but to no purpose.

A new world had opened to him, a world that was calling on him to perform a part, a serious part, and one that required any man's best efforts. He was to save a friend from death and he had no misgivings about undertaking the duty. Temporary insanity was to be his plea, and so powerful did it seem that his line of defense was but a tangled net that required skillful handling. Mentally already he had handled it and felt no doubt about the issue. He was so sure, in fact, that it produced little excitement in him. What stirred him was that his time for action had come. He tried to throw the thought from him but for the moment it dominated him and all he was concerned about or connected with.

But as the disturbed needle returns to the pole, his mind reverted to Page. What effect would his taking part in the world of affairs, becoming a worker among his fellow-men, have on her? A new excitement burned in him at this thought: a feeling of restlessness. How harsh he had been the night before, when she herself, in a highly wrought nervous condition at being unexpectedly called upon to figure in a terrible tragedy, needed his tenderness—needed to be soothed! And days must elapse before he could see her, as he had given his word to Fielding to go at once to the family to offer them what help and comfort he could.

As he opened his front door, Page was softly turning the knob of the one that led to her Aunt Constance's room.

She found her lying on the outside of the bed, pale, and as she had feared, rather prostrated. Page, with her thoughts and intentions uppermost, regarded her as a silent rebuke.

She walked, deciding with a sudden contracting of her jaws to have it over, straight up to the side of the bed.

"Aunt Constance," she said, "I have sold my house."

There was no reply, but two feeble hands went out. Page did not take them and for a full moment they gazed into each other's eyes. When she turned away she knew that Aunt Constance knew. Page had never experienced a moment quite like this. She was glad it was over.

She spent the day in dutiful, devoted attentions. For the most part there was silence, a few words about the tragedy — about Emily, and that was all.

Two days were passed like this, during every hour of which Page was never once able to rid herself of the feeling that in forsaking Aunt Constance she was acting an almost criminal part. This was acute anguish to her, and once, in a moment of partial madness under the strain, she felt rise up in her like a viper, anger at the sweet, frail creature whose ailments, even whose existence, stood in her way. This feeling alarmed Page and for a moment she feared she might be developing into a monster or a maniac. That night when she was bathing Aunt Constance's feet some scalding tears, that her aunt did not know of, dropped upon them.

If only, she thought, Aunt Constance would burst out upon her as Dave had done and call her a traitor. If only she would demur or become peevish or exacting like so many old sick people—but she didn't: she only clung to her with a passionate tenderness that was like a whip-lash upon her, and followed her every movement with famished, tragic eyes. Page tried to escape these passionate imploring eyes or she would rub her hands to be freed of the loving feverish touch that burnt them.

On the afternoon of the third day she went to see Emily and before she left she arranged with her Cousin Mary to board Aunt Constance during her absence and begged of Emily to try to take her place. Emily promised, her face lighting up for a moment, as in the sacred task there might be salvation for her. All was settled now.

On her way home she was drawn to her old house. Mrs. Bartlett had sent around her things, so she supposed she too had left. She felt the desire to see just how things were and quickened her steps. She reached the spot and found to her amazement that the house was already being pulled down.

The hour was sundown and the workmen had abandoned labor for the day. Never had she seen a house demolished as this one had been. They had torn off all the front and left the interior standing cruelly exposed. And they had also cut down the tree, the beautiful old weeping willow. It lay prostrate in the débris. Some children were riding on the limbs and cracked branches. It sent shudders through her and she picked up a few leaves to keep—she would never look upon them except through a flood of memories. There was a look of despair in

her eyes as she looked away from it to the frontless house before her that her act had made grotesque and ridiculous. Somehow the little parlor mantel-piece standing there bare and exposed looked pitiful, the narrow steps holding fast to the wall seemed terrified, and the gay but faded wall papering, a white ground covered with a profusion of pink buds, seemed bashful and ashamed at being thus exposed to the public gaze.

There was no excuse in her mind for this reckless destruction. She realized that she did not want the money, as all her life before she had wanted money, to do good with, to help those in need and bring joy and smiles to the stricken, but to forsake all these and go away for the sake of herself—an act that would cause shame and pain to many. But she knew these thoughts would not deter her. She was going—going to hide away and bid herself shine that she might see what she was as a detached being and what she might do in a new and larger world. In that world she would be free and independent. She would probably hold nothing sacred and nothing would hold her sacred. The worst as well as the best could leap to the front and howl aloud if it would. She was a moth longing for light, dying for pain-singed wings. She had no doubt that she would get them but the thought of pain for her own sake made her all the more eager. She stood in front of her demolished house and by the side of her fallen tree, her feet among the bricks and in the dying leaves feeling cruel and selfish but grim in her determination.

Many pictures besides the demolished house and the fallen tree rose up. The whole city, all the streets, and houses and stores stood up erect and full of ques-

tioning before her half-frightened eyes asking her why she was becoming a deserter. And in every door and out of every window a stern or sweet face full of love and solicitude peered out asking her why. To all this, and to all the people, she answered irrelevantly and not fully understanding, that she herself was the why.

But love for all that she was leaving gushed from her. And her eyes tried to roam farther than she could see. The children who had been playing upon the branches of the fallen tree had vanished and no one was in view except a little boy whom she knew by sight who lived at the corner. He was carrying home some groceries in little packages in his arms. How well she knew the little form! Maybe she would never see him again. She watched the child until he had entered the house and closed the door. Then her eyes rested upon the heavens where the sun was setting tranquilly in some burnished clouds.

She looked until all the color had left the sky and a gray quietude had sprung up about her. Glancing once more at the crippled, helpless, and reproachful house, she turned and walked rapidly up the street.

Before reaching home Page had performed another duty. She went by to see her Cousin Betty. That interview, that she dared not escape, had tried her sorely, but it was also now of the past.

She quietly entered the room and found her Aunt Constance peacefully sleeping. This was a great relief to her. Ever since her positive decision to leave she had wanted to be alone, to realize it all and analyze her feelings. And now she was like the drunkard, about to take his drink in secret — the drink that had been withheld from him.

The evening had turned cool and as there was a little chill on the great quiet solemn room, she made a wood-fire that soon sparkled and blazed, lighting it with dancing patches of light and shadow.

The days and nights had been exhausting and in the warmth and with her head back on the old velvet chair, she began to feel sleepy. She stretched, aroused herself, and sprang to her feet. Catching sight of her face in the mirror, she started. A change seemed to have come over her features that, while it alarmed, fascinated her. She had always loved studying her own face and went over and looked at herself for quite a while just as she had looked at the beautiful sunset. That particular sunset and herself to-night she would never forget.

She began all of a sudden and to her great surprise to feel elated, a wild flighty feeling that made her dance a little, but very lightly so as not to awaken her aunt. Then, as though controlled by a strange will, she sang under her breath so as scarcely to be heard at all. Then she fancied she saw Dave's face peering at her through the window. She shrank back, a kind of pain stifled her joy and she buried her face in her arms and cried. Finally she was again seated in the old chair, thinking of one afternoon quite a number of years ago now, when she was barely escaping her childhood, and a rough boy, with whom she had been playing, caught her, and before she could escape, had her in his arms imprinting a long passionate kiss on her mouth. There had been rapture in her anger and a combination of emotions that she had never been rid of and that she seemed to be experiencing now. She was sorry and glad, happy and wretched, all at once, and angry with herself, as she

had been with the boy, and yet half in love with herself, as she had also been, for the moment with the boy. She was under the control of similar emotions. But suddenly there was a clutching at her heart, a kind of spasm.

How still Aunt Constance was! She was lying as motionless as one dead. Suppose she had died — suppose her gentle spirit had slipped away.

Her heart leaped at the thought — that catastrophe would prevent her departure!

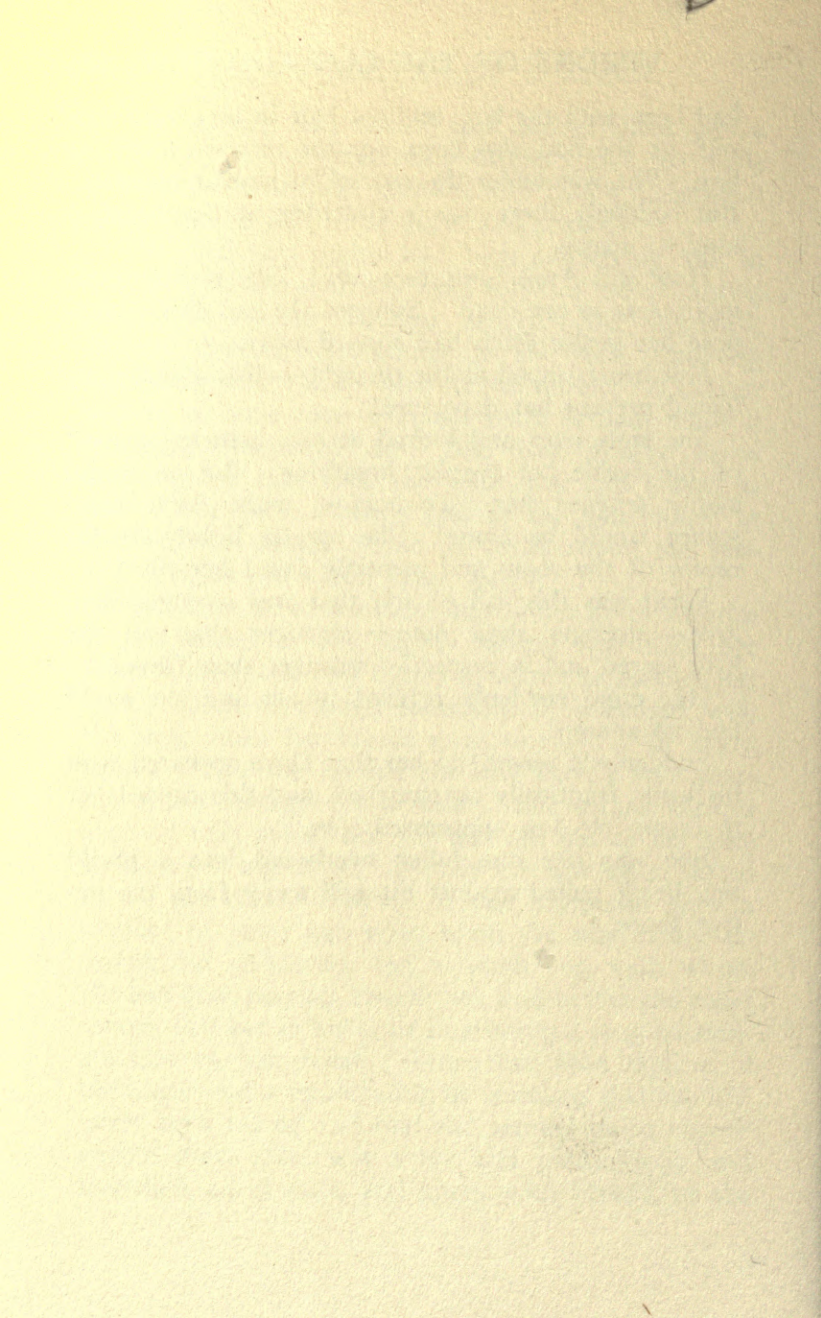
She stole over and looked at her, assuring herself of the feeble but regular breathing. But an awful agony gripped her. To-morrow night Aunt Constance would be alone! She sprang lightly to the center of the room and mentally faced herself.

What was this call of self that was stronger than love — stronger than duty — stronger than all she held sacred and in respect — stronger than Dave?

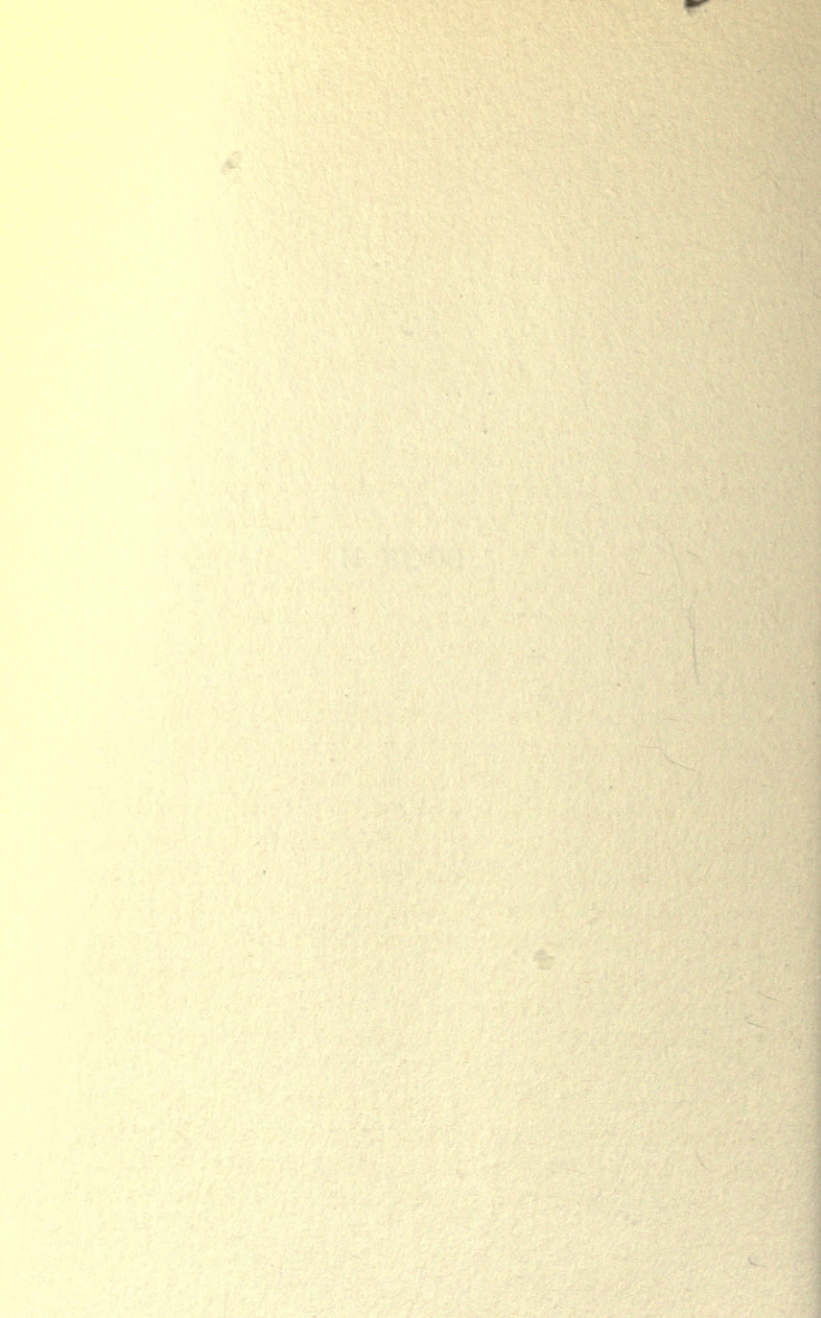
Her mind suddenly refused to act and she could find no answer.

Suddenly it seemed to her that Dave appeared with his arms frantically outstretched, and this caused her to break into low suppressed sobs.

She was like one fallen overboard into a placid sea, being pulled against his will away from the native shore.



BOOK II



BOOK II

CHAPTER I

A NIGHT ON WHEELS

PAGE was sitting in a Pullman car for the first time and, in spite of many harrowing experiences, was, for the moment, experiencing no regrets.

She was feeling the softness of the seat she occupied and reveling in the splendor of the coach. The beautiful blue velvet that ornamented it, the shining mirrors and graceful draperies, enchanted her, and she was quickly intoxicated by the first luxury she had ever known.

She did not know they fitted the cars up like this and in the velvety atmosphere that seemed to touch her, she felt all her sorrows slip away.

The colored porter, who passed through, seemed to her a being possessed of superior knowledge and, unlike her, he was perfectly at home in this moving palace. He was beginning to make up the beds and Page watched him with keen interest. She had never seen a man make a bed before and it astonished her that he could do it so well. She hoped hers would be the last bed he would make; she would like to sit up all night.

Two men behind her were talking. Their voices seemed to reach her through great space and she began to feel as one in a dream. She turned and looked at them, experiencing astonishment. They were

dressed as fastidiously as women and were literally surrounded by their possessions — valises, canes, umbrellas, books, magazines, etc.

Immediately they vaguely represented the wealth she had been longing to see. It was all very strange to find herself moving along, as it were, side by side with strangers. She had never been in the presence before of people not, in every way, familiar to her. A big world opened up that almost alarmed her.

She turned her gaze from it all and looked a while out of the windows at the fields and the starlit sky above them, trying to discover the different kinds of fields, whether corn, or wheat, or clover, but there was no moon and it was difficult. When she looked into the coach again the splendor greeted her with redoubled force; the blue velvet that covered everything was seductively beautiful and felt more than ever delicious to her fingers. Oh, that she could go on this way, a part of all this splendor, for weeks and weeks!

A woman superbly gowned in a light silk and smelling of the most intoxicating extracts had just passed her. She rattled like the leaves on a tree and walked with a free, bold, self-confident air. Who was she? Where did she come from? She was like an unknown plant springing into existence before her eyes. These strange people starting up as from another world, and the splendor of their appearance, overpowered her. This woman traveling in a light colored silk and smelling like a whole rose garden had made a powerful impression upon her. She suddenly felt small and insignificant and sank back in her corner. Her mind in a kind of terror flew to Dave. He did not, she felt sure, dream that there

were such large, magnificent, beautifully dressed, perfumed women, otherwise he could never have placed her upon such a pedestal. And men like these two behind her, with their composure and rare quality of speech and voice, they would surely intimidate Dave.

A picture loomed up before her eyes of a forest where birds with broken wings lay prone upon the earth. That seemed to her the home she was turning her back upon. The sight of these three people, these two men with almost painfully well fitting clothes, and one woman in a light silk, provoked it. In the three she had witnessed more self-confidence and self-assertion than in all the people she had ever seen before.

She felt ashamed, for the first time, of her dress, and doubly ashamed of all the worn, ill-fitting clothes of the men she knew. Her heart fluttered and she wanted to cry over everything—every rag, every threadbare coat, every worn shoe. She would have liked to raise all the old, torn, and tattered flags to hide her people from the like of these.

She was aroused by the porter coming to make her bed. When she asked him the time, he said it was after eleven o'clock and Page was astonished. It had not seemed ten minutes to her. As all the other people in the coach had gone to bed, she supposed she would have to, and after a few minutes she was behind a curtain, stretched out on her back, with wide-open eyes and beating heart.

The train went tearing through the night. One of these two finely dressed men was snoring. For the rest all was quietude, except for the turning of the wheels, and the occasional blowing of the whistle—a low mournful tone it had that she knew she would

never forget — and the sudden flash of sound, as it were, when a fence or car on another track was passed.

She slept fitfully, sometimes for an hour or more, sometimes for but a few minutes. Each time that she awoke she raised her curtain and looked out at the sky, and on the vanishing scene. Once or twice the stopping of the car awoke her and she saw the depots of towns and cities. Strange voices greeted her and the trucks piled up with trunks reminded her anew of a world of people before unconceived by her.

When she was dressed in the morning, she seemed not only to be among strangers but was herself also a stranger. No one was talking; not even when there were several in a party. There were some children and they sat up prim and demure like the grown people. Everything and everybody was orderly. There were many more people on the train than when it left Richmond. The women were all well dressed and looked self-satisfied but bored. The men were reading newspapers. It was the women who engaged her attention. She could make out nothing about them. Had they been encased in armor their personality could not be more concealed. Who were these women, she pondered? What did they exist for? Were they wives, mothers, or old maids? They might be anything. One woman who wore a scarlet hat and had black eyes and a thin sharp nose seemed to Page, she could not define why, to have a wicked face. Her countenance was like a mask. She turned from her with a shudder, but after a while looked at her again for a long while. The woman had not changed her position and Page marveled that people could remain erect and motionless so long. It

puzzled her to know why all were so orderly, sitting like people in church instead of trying to be sociable among themselves as she had always seen women trying to be. The contrast between these women and those she had left was so sharp that it struck her in the eyes like a blow.

Finally the train rolled into Jersey City station and as all the people got up and filed out she took up her little old-fashioned bag, that Aunt Constance had lent her, and filed out too. She became suddenly so excited that for a moment her brain refused to act. She followed the crowd dazed and crossed the ferry like one in a trance.

She did not know what she had expected to behold on arriving in New York, but her visions, over and over indulged in, had been of splendor. What greeted her was hideousness, a kind of hideousness that she never had seen. The very blackness of the streets, as she left the ferry, shocked her. Like a flash, as she stepped carefully over this black earth, came visions of white cobble stones, or of silver or pine tag covered roads extending through pine forests with the rich brown or red soils of the fields beyond. She saw these roads turning to more delicate shades in the golden light or split asunder by crystals of ice that shone in the dazzling sun.

Her thoughts were interrupted by an awful roar that reached her ears, the roar it seemed to her of ten thousand lions in the agony of strife! Looking ahead of her, she saw the black iron structures over the streets with the trains tearing like mad over people's heads. Tall massive buildings, stone, iron and brick, all seemed about to fall and crush her. On the sidewalk, rushed this way and that, a ceaseless army

of men and women. As she stood jostled and pushed about, with the cry of newsboys like the piercing screeches of mad birds penetrating her ears; with the dull day about her; with the smoke rising and descending from a thousand tall chimneys, a terrible impression of brute strength and awful heartlessness came over her. Her soul cried out as she realized that it was this supreme expression of sordid might and brute strength that had swept down on their dream life—on a land of placidity and picturesque delight, where motion was represented by the old packet-boat, drawn by a mule, that trailed its slow length through placid waters, and where the captain might wait for a fair woman to alight and gather a handful of wild flowers. To be invaded by this! As she got into a carriage her foot slipped and her eyes were overflowing, but through her tears she looked out fascinated by the very horrors that had appalled her.

CHAPTER II

THE LOST SHEEP

FOR the first time in her life, after a confused drive, Page set foot in a hotel and for the first time rode in an elevator. The sensations she experienced and the rapidity with which her brain received impressions left nothing clear. She saw before her a confusion of mirrors, carpets, draperies, pictures, and, always, movement. In her dazed condition she saw no life in the movement. People seemed unmindful of purpose, simply changing from place to place. It was like the figures they danced at the country parties in Virginia. She wondered that there was not someone at every corner and on every floor of the hotel calling figures. She had a feeling such as she once had when, with a party of girls, she drank, for the fun of it, too much home-made blackberry bounce. There was an excitement in the very atmosphere that caused her to feel she could leap into the air.

Having been assigned a room, she took her seat and looked about her, but almost immediately got up and went over to the window. The cars and vehicles tearing up and down and the crowd of people made her fear that she might go mad in such a place.

She never dreamed or conceived of so many people; neither the hosts of heaven nor all the armies of hell she fancied could muster so many.

She stood two hours at her window without moving, looking out on the restless, surging mass. Where

were they all going? Whence had they come? Had each separate thoughts? It was maddening.

Finally, the chambermaid came in with some towels and she turned to her, her face white as death.

"Where are all these people going?" she inquired of the girl.

"Where are they going?" asked the maid amazed.

"Yes, do they rush up and down that way all the time?"

"Why, of course; that's Broadway." And she laughed.

"I've never been here before," Page explained.

"I'm from the South—*Virginia*."

Her emphasis on the word "*Virginia*" appeared to make no impression on the girl, although Page thrilled as she spoke it. Her being here she felt made no impression.

The girl straightened the table cover and went out. It had been the same when she had tried to establish sympathy between the cab-driver and herself by also telling him she was a stranger and from Virginia. He did not even reply—merely pocketed the money she handed him, touched the rim of his hat, and drove off.

This unsympathetic manner of the working-people was most disturbing; it robbed her of a pleasant patronage that she had always indulged in. When she finally retired for the night, her excited thoughts kept her from sleeping, and, in spite of the delightful bed, she got up, went to the window again, and there on her knees spent the better part of the night.

It appeared to her that the same people she had seen in the morning were still walking. They walked all night. At one time she thought that the people were

stationary and the sidewalks moving; that they were simply being borne along by some mechanical contrivance. Women as well as men made up the procession. At two o'clock the moon appeared in sight and looked down on it all for an hour. Then it disappeared. The people never disappeared. A new army had arrived; working men and working girls. The men looked to her like lumps of iron, and the girls like starved, frightened birds.

At six o'clock she went to bed and fell asleep with the roar still in her ears. She slept until late and was barely dressed at eleven o'clock when a new chambermaid entered. She was a tall dark haired girl and seemed to Page of a more sociable turn. She inquired of her immediately where the other maid was, the one she had seen the day before.

"Oh, she's gone," she replied. "They're always changing here."

"Where do they go?" Page asked.

"Go! They disappear!" and she laughed.

Page felt this strangely. You then saw a person to-day and to-morrow that person disappeared. It was uncanny — as though there was a big hole which swallowed people up.

"And you never hear of them again?"

"Oh, sometimes, not often!"

Page smiled. "And will you disappear?"

"I might if the old woman gets cranky." She was beating up the pillows.

"I hope you won't while I'm here."

"Well, maybe not. Going to stay long?"

"I would like to if I can! I'm from the South, where the awful war was fought!"

"The South?" said the girl, eyeing her.

"The *dear, sunny* South!" Page broke in.

"Well, you'll get along."

Page went up to the girl. "Why? Why do you say that? I'm beginning to feel awfully afraid that I won't!"

"Why, the men are all plumb crazy about Southern women."

"Why?" Page asked breathlessly.

"I don't know. There's two or three in this hotel, and they live swell. One of 'em's got a fine turnout."

"How do you know they are from the South?" Page asked.

"Why, they tell you the minute they set eyes on you, jest as you did." She was dusting the bureau now. "But I've got so I can tell 'em. I knew what you were before you opened your mouth."

"I'm glad of that. And being from Virginia is a little different," Page tried to explain to her, "better; you see Virginia was the mother of the other states."

"I can put you on to a good boarding house if you like," was all the girl replied, and when she was gone Page sat down and began to think.

The men preferred the Southern women; several lived in this hotel, and lived swell; one had a carriage.

How could they afford to live in a grand hotel and live "swell," and one have a carriage?

These questions tormented her so that when the girl returned later with a waste basket she questioned her.

"What do these Southern women in this hotel do?" she asked.

"Do? They have a good time."

"How?"

"Why, they go about, to the theater and everywhere."

"Are they then so rich?" inquired Page.

"You don't suppose I ask them?"

"No, of course not," Page answered, blushing.

When the girl went out and the door closed, she thought a long time about returning home. A terrible dread had seized her and a feeling of utter incompetence.

CHAPTER III

DANGERS OF FREEDOM

It had been Page's intention to remain one day in the hotel and then find herself the cheap small room of her dreams.

At the end of a month she had not made the change. Two things held her. The fascination of the luxury that surrounded her, and the fear of starting out.

She had not been able to pen a line and still had that drunk feeling as though she were being dosed with strong wine. Her feeling of undefined alarm had in no way deserted her.

She had come to New York with a purpose and her purpose seemed slipping from her. She could not conceive of herself writing in a place where motion and noise never ceased. One day she joined the army of paraders. All day long, at intervals, she marched up and down Broadway, staring about her and into the marvelous shops, especially those where flowers were sold. The women and the flowers resembled each other; they appeared to her gorgeous but soulless. Several times, tempted, she bought flowers in the street but the roses had no odor and the violets had a rank horrible perfume that revolted her. Always they were wilted by the morning.

If only she knew someone to whom she could talk and tell how the flowers smelt at home and kept fresh for days! But she might walk up and down a hun-

dred years, she supposed, and never know a soul.

Several times she went into the crowded restaurants simply to try to hear what the people talked about. She didn't catch much, but the places themselves affected her agreeably and at times she experienced delicious sensations. Her thoughts, she felt, would have filled volumes, but she could only revel in them — these spontaneous thoughts independent of the control of others. Before she had always been like one of a circle holding hands, her ideas never wholly her own. Now she could think anything under heaven that she liked and God seemed so far away that she was not afraid of Him. She had no doubt that it was possible here to forget God altogether.

Letters from home remained unanswered. A pile of them lay unopened on her center-table. She feared to be recalled to attached conditions, and scarcely dared touch them. To be unrelated was like being freed of a tight bandage about the head. She began to ask herself what Dave was to her — if there really was any Dave or any home for that matter. Had she simply had a dream of an hour of these things and awakened, or had she fallen asleep for an hour. All the reality that remained to her was the heavens and before going to sleep she would hold fast to the window sill and study them long and faithfully.

There were moments when this life of non-responsibility was so intoxicating that she felt tempted to remain in the hotel until she had spent all her money and see what would happen to her. She spoke to no one except the chambermaids and the waiters. Anything that suggested an interruption to her present

isolation, even God, she held aloof from. It was so wonderful to revel undisturbed in her own personality that she desired only herself. She often saw, with her mind's eye, the bricks of her home falling, one by one, the whole gradually being leveled to the ground. But it no longer made any impression on her.

Half mad letters and telegrams came from Dave. She paid no attention to them.

One morning the maid, who had grown quite familiar, knocked and entered at the same time. She was bent double with laughter and when Page inquired the cause of her merriment she controlled her mirth and told her that she "had caught her at it again."

"Caught who at what?" Page asked.

"There's a young lady in number 43 who lives off what she can steal off the trays set outside by people who order up."

"*What?*"

"Yes, and she's a Southerner! She says she comes from Tennessee and she is pretty too, only she looks so starved. You've seen her, haven't you; that young girl with the big scared eyes and the changed hair?"

Page had seen such a girl prowling cat-like about the halls and sitting listlessly at times in the parlors.

"What did you say she does?" she asked puzzled.

"Why, she lives in a hotel because she says she can't stand a boarding house, that she's bound to have elegance around her, and she steals off the hall trays before the waiters take them down."

"Steals what?"

"Anything she can, anything that's left. A roll, or potato, or cold chop, anything! She knows I know it too."

Page felt herself pale. "Don't say that!" she cried. "It's too horrible. Is she so poor?"

"Poor! She's starving!"

"Poor creature!" Page cried, tears gushing to her eyes.

"Poor creature? Why don't she go and get herself a room in a boarding house? She can get room and board for what she pays here for the room alone. She says she's got to have elegant surroundings!" The maid repeated this, laughing. As Page looked upon her coarse, red face and well-fed body, she contrasted her with the little famished soul whose startled eyes had met hers several times, and who probably feared that possibly she also had detected her thefts.

"It's true, Annie," she replied; "you can't understand it, but it's true; some Southern women can't live without luxuries. I know in Richmond, a Mrs. Burwell—"

"Well, maybe they can't." the girl interrupted, "but when they fall that low they fall lower, and I've told her so."

The girl left the room and Page fell into a trance. Pride and the difficulty of adjustment to new and sordid conditions had caused this poor girl to purchase her existence in congenial surroundings at the expense of the last vestige of self-respect.

The little startled, pathetic face, the thin, almost emaciated, form and tiny bird-like hands, little thieving hands, rose before her. The girl, this famished girl, without self-respect, was the victim of luxury to which she was born, which had descended to her through generations, and of which she had been ruthlessly robbed. And what was the difference between

that girl and herself? She hadn't stolen from the trays. Possibly that was all. Perhaps the girl didn't at first; perhaps she didn't for a long time; perhaps it was only when her money was giving out! Oh, what a horrible thing—what a pitiful thing! She was quite sure now that neither she nor any one could dream what they might come to.

She would call Annie, find out that boarding house, and move at once.

CHAPTER IV

THE SKY-LIGHT ROOM

THE following day she moved to the boarding house the chambermaid had recommended and discovered that it was, on first sight, quite as handsome as the hotel. This was a great surprise. Boarding houses that she had seen in Richmond were all wretched affairs—places of refuge for the despairing. This boarding house was imposing. A large brown-stone front house with handsome lace curtains at the parlor windows; a solemn, important looking hall, and innumerable rooms of all descriptions.

She climbed the four flights of stairs to the only vacant, single room that could be offered, in elated spirits. This room was in the center of the hall, the hall itself being covered by a fine glass dome, and was, what she had never seen before, a sky-light room. There were no windows on the sides, and the light and air came in from above. There was a blue curtain that she could pull backwards and forwards to admit or shut out the sun. The furniture was not handsome; it had the look of having finally landed there after hard tribulation, just as Page had. Her little bed, after the fine one in the hotel, looked prim and uninviting.

The hostess informed her that this room was rented mostly to gentlemen who simply wanted a place to sleep, but that if it suited her, she could have it

for seven dollars a week. This, she declared, was very cheap, but she supposed Page meant to be permanent.

Page decided that it did suit very well and assured Mrs. Nesbit that she was very thankful to have found it.

What a relief it was to know that her three meals a day were arranged for. A new life would begin for her, and shut up, as in a prison, she hoped to begin to write! To this outburst Mrs. Nesbit made no reply. She was examining a tear in the carpet which she said would be attended to and which Page assured her made not the least difference, begging that she would not give it a thought.

When her hostess, for Page so styled her, had retired, she took her seat on the side of her little bed and looked about her.

Voices reached her from the adjoining room; cigar smoke came through the transom and the sound of a piano being played on the floor below greeted her ear. It was as though she had entered a new world and shut the door on the old one. She lay down on her little bed and fixed her eyes on the patch of blue sky that looked down on her from the sky-light. Somehow since she had been in this little room she seemed to be the only human being in the world, a human being utterly alone who had dreamed of people and things.

As though to deny this, Dave came up more real than she had ever beheld him. It irritated her. Why could she not shut Dave out of her mind? It was as though he were trying to control her through all this space. There came over her suddenly momentary weariness that lasted until someone com-

menced singing downstairs, some woman with a clear strong voice. Page had never heard such a voice, or such singing. It was as though a human frame held a captured angel who was pouring forth a song. Who was this wonderful singer? Perhaps some visitor and she would never see her — never know who she was. The voice would cease and that would be the end.

That was what she could not get used to — so many thousands of people she didn't know and never would know, who had lived all the while she had, existing all apart from her.

If someone sung at home she knew who it was, just who gave her music lessons, all the stages of her progression, and it was not so interesting, not so alluring; the element of mystery was lacking. At last the voice ceased and everything was still again.

The room was growing dark; drowsiness stole over her and she fell asleep. She must have slept very soundly for she did not awake during the afternoon.

At seven o'clock the maid knocked and told her she would be late for dinner. She rose, feeling dull and stupid, scarcely knowing where she was and looked about her.

It was a strange sensation to find herself in a little square windowless room with the moon shining straight down on her head. She looked up at it and then again about her. By the light from the hall transom, she could distinguish objects clearly. Passing her hand across her tumbled head without arranging her toilet, she descended the stairs timidly.

At the dining-room door a flood of light burst into her face and she stopped embarrassed. She had no idea of seeing such a crowd of people. There were

from forty to fifty persons of all kinds and descriptions assembled, among them men and women in evening dress.

Several waitresses were in attendance. Knives and forks and dishes rattled from a room somewhere in the rear. Mrs. Nesbit appeared from this rear room with a flushed face, led her in, seated her at a center seat of the large table that occupied the middle of the room and formally introduced her.

"Miss Warwick, ladies and gentlemen," she said. After a glance or two at her, Page seemed to be forgotten and conversation went on unbrokenly as her soup was placed before her.

So this was a New York boarding house! Certainly she had never before seen anything so dazlingly brilliant, and not a person but who appeared boldly at ease except herself. And the dinner itself! What an elaborate display.

Page had noticed over by the window a small vacant table, and was half wondering who had the honor of a table to him or herself, when suddenly a gentleman, so like her Cousin Edmund that she actually started, entered the doorway.

He was a fair man of about sixty, of pink-and-white complexion, rather corpulent, faultlessly dressed, and wore a white rosebud in the lapel of his coat.

The whole dining-room said, "Good-evening, Colonel," in a chorus, but the Colonel, who, Page noticed, walked unsteadily, only waved his hand, bowed slightly, and asked in a soldierly fashion of one of the waitresses where Mrs. Nesbit was.

"In the kitchen, sir," the girl replied.

"Tell her to come here!" the Colonel then commanded imperatively.

"She's busy with the carving, Colonel."

"Tell her to come here!" repeated the Colonel slowly and with emphasis.

"That's Colonel Beverly," an old lady whispered to Page. "He's been boarding with Mrs. Nesbit for nine years!"

"Yes?" Page answered with great interest.

"He's a Virginian, and he thinks he owns the whole place." And she whispered: "He's a pretty hard drinker. Do you see that one over there opposite you?" she added.

"That grave looking man?" Page asked.

"Yes. Well, he's been here ten years. There's great rivalry."

"He's not a Virginian?" Page asked.

"Oh, no," and the old lady whispered again, "he's from Vermont. He's the editor of——." She named a conspicuous paper.

"Oh!" Page stared at the gentlemen.

In the meantime the Colonel was still clamoring for Mrs. Nesbit, who finally entered rather meekly and threw an apron over her hand.

"Did you send for me, Colonel?"

"Yes, madam, I did!" answered the Colonel pompously.

"Well, Colonel?"

"I want to ask you a question, madam!"

Mrs. Nesbit shifted her position.

"I've been in your house for ten years, madam, haven't I?"

"*Nine*, Colonel," said the Vermonter.

"Well, then," and the Colonel glared, "nine; I've been in this house nine years, haven't I?"

"Yes, Colonel."

"And during that time you've never heard me tell a lie, have you?"

A young man over at a corner table whistled, and the Colonel turned ferociously, "Well, sir?"

"Oh, nothing, Colonel."

"Oh, do sit down and have your dinner, Colonel," said the old lady at Page's side.

The Colonel bowed very low to her. "With all due deference to you, madam, when a question has been settled. Nine years; is that right, Mr. Dalton?"

"Quite so, sir," said the editor from Vermont.

"Well, then, Mrs. Nesbit, in all that time, those nine years, have I ever had a decent mint julep in the City of New York?"

"I never heard you say so, Colonel."

"Never heard me say so! Have I ever had one?"

"No, Colonel."

"Very well, madam; thank you. That is all." And the Colonel took his seat.

During this little scene conversation was only partly arrested. People were talking on various subjects. Card parties were being arranged. Some were hurrying the waitresses because they were going to the theater, and in the midst of it all, dazed and confused, Page sat looking on, trying to take it all in.

In spite of her efforts to shut her out, poor little Sadie May kept cropping up. She felt irritated at this; it seemed so silly. The vision remained, however, as well as the little house falling to pieces, and the old tree that she supposed had long since been carted away.

She sat through it all until they brought her her little cup of black coffee, and then, as she had seen the others rise informally and leave the table, she did so, glad to escape.

CHAPTER V

BOARDING HOUSE LIFE

THE moonlight had gone when Page reached her room, and she could see half a dozen beautiful stars shining down.

She thought she would like to tell Dave of this little patch of the heaven that she could look up at and see any moment if she chose, and was suddenly stung by the consciousness of how she had been neglecting those at home.

Then she fell to musing upon all she had seen and heard downstairs and all she was experiencing. She thought how wonderful her life was becoming, how inexplicable and marvelous it was for her to be here in this dazzling place. And how delightful that there was someone here from Virginia. Oh! How she wanted to speak out and tell the Colonel she would make a mint julep for him! She was interrupted in these pleasant thoughts by a light tap on her door. To her cheery "Come in" her old lady neighbor entered.

"I thought I would just run in first to ask how you were getting along, and see if I could borrow some matches."

"Why, certainly," said Page, cordially. "Won't you take a seat?"

"Perhaps you're tired out and want to go to bed?"

"Oh, no, I fell asleep before dinner. I *was* tired when I got here to-day!"

"You're a Southerner, aren't you?"

"Yes, Virginian." It *would* come out.

"Well, I'm from Indiana."

Page laughed.

"Why do you laugh?"

"Oh, I don't know, but Indiana and all such places have been so unreal to me that to meet someone who was really born there and to find her a real human being surprised me!" It was so delightful to be talking to someone. "Oh! Pardon me!" she rambled on, "I have funny ideas sometimes. Do you know that Vermont is simply to me a green spot of one shape and Indiana a pink spot of another on the map of America?"

The old lady peered at Page. "How did you hear about this house — any one send you here?"

"Why, the chambermaid at the hotel told me! She said she had lived here two years," Page answered.

"What was her name?"

"Annie."

"Oh, there have been dozens of Annies. They're all alike. Do you think you will like it here?"

"I certainly do. It seems magnificent to me."

"Magnificent!" The old lady looked aghast. "Did you take beef?"

"No, they brought me chicken, I think."

"Well, that may be why you think it magnificent. If you had had my piece of beef you might have had a different impression."

This all seemed very funny to Page, and she laughed again merrily.

"I don't believe I would have thought of it," she replied.

"Going to be long here?"

"Oh, I hope so."

"You've got the sky-light room," looking around her little room, "haven't you?"

"Yes, and I really like it. Why, I can just sit and look at the sky all day and night too, if I like."

"Look at the sky through that little hole? Well, you Southern people are funny! We generally have about a dozen in the house, but there's nobody but the Colonel now."

"Is that all?" Page asked.

"I suppose you'll soon be in hot water like the rest of them! Now see here, my dear — what's your name?"

"Warwick."

"Well, Miss Warwick, I've been living in boarding houses for thirty years, and my advice to you is to keep your mouth shut; even when you eat keep your mouth shut!"

"Oh, I will," Page laughed.

"They'll try to drag you in."

"Will they?"

"And if they do, give it to them."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't be equal to them."

"Oh, I know you Southerners; all you've got to do is to get you mad. Did you say you could lend me some matches?"

"Certainly." Page got her some.

"Well, good-night. We're on the same floor. I'm 22. If you want anything just call on me."

Page opened the door for this strange, gossipy little lady, and saw her toddle off to her room. Just as she was closing it the landlady appeared at the head of the steps.

"Wait a moment, Miss Warwick; I was just coming up to speak to you."

Page waited.

"Has old Miss Jenkins been in to see you?" she asked, entering.

"An old lady has been in, yes."

"Found out your name, where you were from?"

"Yes," Page replied.

"Well, she does that to everybody who arrives. Now if you value your life, Miss Warwick, don't get in with her. I don't like to discuss my boarders, but that old creature is a holy terror. She gives me more trouble than the whole house, and that's saying a good deal, for I have some pretty troublesome ones."

"I am sure you must have," said Page, sympathetically. "I felt awfully sorry for you when the Colonel questioned you so."

"Oh, the Colonel, nobody minds the Colonel; he's just like a big baby. Everybody worships him. He has his failings," and Mrs. Nesbit turned an imaginary glass to her lips, "but as I said, nobody minds him. Ah, if only they were all like the Colonel," and Mrs. Nesbit sighed.

"I hope *I* won't give you any trouble, Mrs. Nesbit!" Page exclaimed.

"Well, I don't suppose you will; but, you won't mind my saying it, I hope, Miss Warwick, the whole fact of the matter is I am skittish about Southerners, and especially Southern girls."

"Why?" asked Page, surprised.

"They're apt to fly the track," and Mrs. Nesbit shook her head.

"Fly the track?" Page repeated.

"Not that they do so much real harm, but they

don't always behave like ladies, and that's the real truth."

Page looked amazed. "Why, I never heard of such a thing!" she half gasped.

"They say New York turns their heads," said Mrs. Nesbit sadly, "and I suppose it's true. Something does. You see they're pretty, and they know how to entertain the men with nonsense. And they take easy to drinking."

"Drinking!" Page gasped.

"I'm only telling you," Mrs. Nesbit went on. "I've seen scores of them go to pieces since I've been keeping boarding houses in this street; sweet girls, too. You see the whole trouble is they not only don't mean any harm, but when they arrive here they don't know any, and they can be led off; even the Colonel gets led off. But it's different with a man. Well, I must be going. I'm tired out. I'm always tired for that matter, but there's one thing I long since told my Maker, Miss Warwick, and that was that I didn't hold myself responsible for Southern girls who came to board in this house. It may not be right, but it's true. Why, you can't any more hold'm than you can rabbits. Have you everything you want?" she asked abruptly.

"Thank you, everything."

"Well, good-night."

"Good-night." Page caught her by the sleeve. "Mrs. Nesbit," she pleaded hesitatingly, "don't think that way about the Southern girls under your roof! Please don't!"

Mrs. Nesbit turned and looked at her.

"Don't you know — don't you see, it's the war, the awful war that's thrown us on the world?"

Page exclaimed. "*Don't* wash your hands of us!"

"Why don't you stay home and fight it out there?" Mrs. Nesbit asked.

"I don't know," Page answered guiltily, and flushed.

"Well, you ought to. Good-night. Let me know if you want anything."

Page stood still watching her depart, feeling foolish and regretting her betrayal of emotion. At home any woman to whom she had thus appealed would have folded her in her arms. She felt distinctly as she turned into her room that she was a boarder in a New York boarding house, and, for the first time in her life, the necessity of controlling and hiding her feelings.

She wasn't sleepy, so she sat down again and looked about her. Her trunk had been put in her room while she was at dinner. It stared at her and she kept reading her name, "Page Warwick, Richmond, Virginia."

She looked up at the sky but it no longer interested her. The moon was gone and a dark cloud had covered the stars. Suddenly she felt very lonely. A calm settled upon her that was worse than the intoxicated feeling she had experienced in the hotel. All excitement had died out of her, and she longed for sympathetic companionship if only for a few moments. She looked up at the dark hole above her head and indulged in her old dream of a lover suddenly appearing. If only a pair of merry eyes would look down upon her how happy she would be. And then if hands would be extended and she could be dragged up on the roof with the wind blowing and the black clouds moving about. And then suppose

— just suppose — she would find it was Dave!

Presently a party of men passed her door and pretty soon she heard the shuffling and playing of cards and the rattle of poker chips. This kept up like an accompaniment to her thoughts and the cigar smoke that came in her room caused her a little excitement.

She finally went to bed, a bare suspicion of the immensity of things outside of the realm of familiarity pleasantly disturbing. She was conscious of an enormous, unconcerned world, grotesquely controlled by a god or a devil, she was not sure which.

Back of it lay Virginia, still bleeding, devastated and desolate, but proud and serene. Her eyes lingered upon the picture, fascinated; but she was quite content that the picture lay far distant.

CHAPTER VI

WET BLANKETS

THE following morning Page entered the dining-room late for the breakfast hour.

Fifty or more boarders had already breakfasted; the glamour of the evening meal was dispelled, and the table-cloths were far from spotless.

A few people, mostly women, were breakfasting. In their negligés, with their cosmetics and languid mannerisms, they appeared to Page very attractive. A particular woman, who had caught her attention the evening before by a somewhat resplendent personality, stared at her once or twice.

This woman, whose manner was aggressively positive, surprised Page by her irritability. She spoke sharply to the waitress and made an unusually caustic and sarcastic reply to a weak-eyed, weak-voiced female, who timidly addressed her. Her rather harsh voice had grated upon Page's ear unpleasantly.

There was a certain coarseness too about her that Page resented, but the marvelous brown eyes, strong white teeth, and richly colored lips, were dazzling and captivating.

In sharp contrast to the others present, she was the perfection of neatness, held herself erect and was smartly gowned for the street. Her gloves, a hand-bag, and a pile of letters were beside her plate.

"I'm from the West," she announced, as the waitress retired and she caught Page's eye, "and when I give orders I like to see people move!"

Page laughed. "It seems to me," she said, "they are flying all the time! It makes me quite dizzy."

"Flying! In this place? Why, there isn't a boarding house in New York where they have such poor service. You give an order and the servant takes ten minutes to turn around to start off with it. The reason is that the place is, half the time, filled up with a lot of lazy Southerners."

"I'm a Southerner!" Page replied quickly.

"You don't for an instant suppose I didn't know it, do you?" The woman laughed. "You Southern people carry placards around!"

"We are not ashamed of who we are!" Page retorted.

"Of course not! You glory in yourselves and whatever you do!"

"You seem to know a good deal about us!" Page returned curtly.

"I've seen enough of you," the woman answered unmoved. "What are you girls all piling up here for, anyway? Didn't they leave you any men there at all?"

Page stared at her amazed. "What you say sounds rather shocking," she replied.

"Oh! Nonsense! What are *you* doing here?" As Page hesitated she went on: "I wouldn't ask you, but I know the very last one of you likes to tell everything about herself from the name of her great-great-grandfather, down to what she had for breakfast, to everybody she meets."

"I came here to pursue a literary career," replied Page with dignity.

"Oh!" the lady returned with a comprehensive glance. "Alone?" she added pointedly.

"Entirely," said Page, whose cheeks had flushed.

"I wish I could color up as you do," remarked the woman carelessly.

"I wish I *didn't*!" emphasized Page hotly.

"Oh, it's a curable disease! New York is medicine for that and similar Southern ills." She laughed, gathered up her gloves and bag and left the room.

"What is the character of your literary work, Miss Warwick?" asked the editor, who had been scanning her critically during her conversation.

"I'm writing a novel of the South, sir," Page answered, her blush deepening, "a novel of Virginia."

He smiled an indulgent smile.

"A love story?" he asked.

Page, who thought she had never seen such clear, searching eyes, gave vent to a little nervous laugh.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, "it's something far more serious. I hardly think you could call it a romance at all, although, of course, it contains a love story."

"I see."

"Properly speaking," Page answered, encouraged by a smile from the Colonel and slightly flattered by the attention of the table, "my novel is a series of pen-pictures of a period in the history of my people that I think ought to prove most interesting!"

"Yes?" Mr. Dalton was breaking his eggs and didn't look up.

"You see," Page exclaimed somewhat vehemently, "they are put down by an eye-witness and with the heart's blood!"

Mr. Dalton returned his eggs to the kitchen as too hard and then gave her his attention.

"The public is heartless, Miss Warwick," he said.

"It doesn't care how much blood is spilt in an effort, but what kind of splashes the blood makes."

Page's eyes flashed. "I understand that," she replied, "of course! But don't you think that the splashes that I describe, the after effects of war, all the horrors surrounding the survivors of war, should be interesting?"

"Not necessarily."

"What do you mean?" Page asked eagerly, and bending forward over her plate.

"That literary matter depends greatly upon how it is handled, how it is presented to the reader."

"Yes?" Page asked.

"There may be purely personal pictures not calculated to inspire interest in any one, except those already interested."

"Everybody in the South would be interested in my pictures!" Page exclaimed.

"But unfortunately the people who buy books are not in the South, at present, Miss Warwick, and the object of publishers in publishing a book is to sell it."

"You are not very encouraging, Mr. Dalton," Page exclaimed, with a musical but slightly hysterical laugh. "Nevertheless, I think *my* book will sell!"

"Why *your* book especially?" Dalton inquired, and Page thought him rude.

"Because it's all true! Because every scene in it is from life!"

"All lives are not interesting," remarked Dalton.

"But the lives of *Virginians* are interesting, aren't they?"

Dalton smiled and said nothing.

"I've described all the feelings, the *real* feelings of my people since — since their — our —" she

paused, "defeat! Those feelings are very real and intense, Mr. Dalton! We aren't one bit defeated in our *hearts*—we aren't, and you can believe what I say—even though twenty years have passed, at all reconciled!"

Dalton again made no reply, but something in his expression nettled and urged her on.

"The old scar still aches," she burst forth, her cheeks now violently aflame. "Wives still lament their murdered husbands; mothers still dream of their murdered sons, and our dear old maiden ladies still cherish the memory of blighted dreams. As for we younger ones," she laughed defiantly, "I can tell you, we are fired into pain and fury by the tales they tell us!"

"Are you?"

While melodious, his voice was so composed and calm that Page stared at him.

"*Are* we?" Another defiant laugh rang out. "If you could read in the secret corners of our hearts you would see that in spirit not one of us has yielded! We are the unconquered defeated!"

She glanced at the Colonel for approbation and, receiving it, went on more excitedly:

"Don't we prove it, just as soon as the money can be raised, by erecting a monument or a statue to some fallen hero that we may continue to honor our worshiped martyred ones and shout and weep anew! Oh! You should witness one of our unveilings! There is as much enthusiasm, madness if you will, in the hearts of the people as there was one year after the sword of General Lee was yielded up to General Grant!"

"That's right, Miss Warwick, you tell the Yankees

these things!" the Colonel, who was leaving the dining-room, called out.

"My dear Colonel," Mr. Dalton interjected, "you should not mislead Miss Warwick! Novels, such as she describes hers to be, are pouring in to the publishers by the score. The rebels are still yelling, as she admits, and waving the bloody shirt, but it isn't good policy."

"We don't care about good policy!" Page burst forth, receiving a smile from the Colonel at the door.

Mr. Dalton perceptibly raised his massive shoulders.

"Recklessness of policy is Southern folly, Miss Warwick, and I believe you would find it more profitable to tell in your books of all the benefits the war has brought about."

"What benefits? There aren't any benefits that I can see! I never will see any benefit from that wicked, cruel war, Mr. Dalton! Never!"

"But you can't go on looking at things from one side, Miss Warwick! Without that war our development as a civilized nation couldn't have gone on!"

"I see only the other side!" Page retorted. "What war destroyed!"

"Yes, but that is the personal, the trifling side. I'm not speaking of Virginia, you know, but the whole world! The trouble with you Virginians is that you consider Virginia the one important spot in the universe. Now if one of your spring freshets was to come along and wash it off the map we here in New York would have our breakfast just the same."

"Virginia is the grandest spot in the world, Mr. Dalton!" Page exclaimed through tears. "She has never been anything but supreme in the eyes of her

people! I won't sit here and hear her criticised!"

"But," said Dalton, smiling, "you should be brought to the realization of the fact that she has had her day — a very interesting and tragic one, I admit, but you must also admit that she is now a back number!"

Page suddenly paled. "Do you consider your grandmother a back number, Mr. Dalton, because she has had her day as you express it?"

"I haven't one, but if I had I certainly would!"

She laughed nervously. "I suppose," she returned, "it is because sentiment is not estimated by you as a part of life. With us, you know it is; we reverence all the more that which, as you put it, has had its day. All the old ladies in Virginia are queens!"

"Up here, Miss Warwick, we reverence that which is advancing, pushing ahead, becoming of use!"

"Virginia will rise again!" Page exclaimed, routed but holding her ground.

"Possibly," said Mr. Dalton, quietly, "but before she does if her people would stop prating it would be better. You Virginians remind me of a lot of chickens out in the rain cackling about what a fine hen-house they have. If it is so fine why aren't you there?"

"I ought to be!" Page exclaimed, through a gush of tears.

"I agree with you," Dalton answered, and left the table.

"The next time," whispered Miss Jenkins, "you just give it to him!"

But Page, humiliated and still fighting her tears, did not reply.

Mrs. Nesbit appeared at the doorway and made an irrelevant remark about people talking and holding

back the table, and Page hurriedly left the dining-room.

She climbed the steps overwhelmed by emotions which she attempted to control, but once in her room she flung herself, face downwards, on her bed and burst into a torrent of tears.

When her composure was partly restored and she was on her feet, moving aimlessly about her room, a sudden and acute homesickness overtook her and intense longing for the presence of Dave.

Seating herself and taking her little portfolio on her knees, she wrote a long letter to Dave which was, wholly unconscious on her part, a furious appeal for sympathy.

When it was finished she decided to mail it immediately and at the foot of the stairs encountered Mrs. Wilton, who was entering the front door.

"Hello!" said that lady with a smile. "Going out?"

"Yes," answered Page graciously, "I'm going to mail a letter!"

"Been pouring out your woes, eh! I met old Miss Jenkins in the drug store and she said you and Dalton had a round after I left. I wonder," she added, "what makes you Southerners such fools!"

"Are we?" Page asked curiously.

"Of course! The last one of you! Now, why do you bother your head with what a selfish prig like that Dalton has to say? Don't you know he lives only for himself and to be disagreeable? What do you do with yourself all day?" she then inquired abruptly.

"Work!" Page burst forth. "I'm working on my novel!"

"Is that so? Say, wasn't that breakfast this morn-

ing horrible? I didn't eat mine and I know, with Dalton at your heels, you didn't eat a mouthful! I'll tell you what to do! When you've posted your letter come up to my room, second floor front. I'm going over to a little French place in Twenty-seventh Street to get something decent to eat. I'll take you along if you care to go! You'll say when you leave there, that in spite of all your old Virginia cooking, you've never eaten a meal or drank a cup of coffee before. Will you go?"

"Will I?" exclaimed Page, fighting another gush of tears at this sudden encounter of kindness. "I will be only too delighted! To tell you the truth, I've been pretty lonely since I came to New York, and to-day I feel actually blue! You really would like me to go with you?"

"Certainly, come along! It isn't a particularly fine place — these French restaurants never are — but the cooking *is*, and lots of literary people, writers, newspaper men and all that, go there. I may meet someone I know and if I do I will introduce you."

"Oh! You are very kind!" Page cried, highly elated.

"I hope you will continue," said Mrs. Wilton, mounting the steps, "to live up to that statement when you know me better. As for myself, I have my doubts. But," she paused and looked back, "if I can knock some of the Southern nonsense out of you, we can have some good times!"

Page thought how triumphantly beautiful Mrs. Wilton was, laughed, and ran out with her letter.

An hour later they were seated in the little French restaurant.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNEXPECTED VISITOR

"HERE'S a card for you, Miss Warwick," said the maid, entering Page's room a few mornings later. She extended the card and Page, after staring at it, sprang to her feet.

"Dave!" she exclaimed as the door closed on the girl, a dozen conflicting emotions springing to her heart.

She dressed herself as hurriedly as her excitement would permit and descended to the parlor.

The first sight of him standing erect, his eyes fixed upon the open door, angered her.

She had been having some exciting, pleasant hours with her new-found friend, Mrs. Wilton, and his arrival could mean but one thing: he had come to take up the old struggle of standing like a wall between her and her life of independence.

He sprang to meet her, his eyes aflame with love and joy.

"Page!" he exclaimed.

"Dave!" she echoed, putting her hands in his and gazing up at him. "What are you doing here?"

"Your letter brought me!"

"My letter?"

"Yes. The one I received yesterday. You said you were lonely, depressed, had a helpless feeling: I thought you needed me!"

In a flash she understood. She had almost forgot-

ten having written the doleful letter in the interesting events that followed upon it.

"I shouldn't have written it," she said in a suppressed voice. "I was tired — something had happened to worry me — it wasn't fair to myself! I shouldn't have written it!"

"Oh! But, Page, I'm glad you did! It made me forget everything — that dreadful scene when I think I must have been half-mad from grief and excitement — it made me forget that, and that you ran away during my absence — all the pain and anguish — all the anxiety your failure to write has caused me! I forgot everything except that you were lonely — had turned to me for sympathy and that I was coming to you as fast as the train could bring me!" He took up her hands. "To think that I am looking at you, that your hands are in mine! Oh! If you knew how happy I am! You do not know what this day is in my life! It's the first pleasure, I believe, that I ever openly, boldly, unstintingly gave myself!"

How natural his voice sounded, how used she was to this flow of impassioned words. What memories they brought back!

"Dave!" she again exclaimed.

"Shall we sit here on this sofa?" he asked, glancing about him and leading her towards one.

When she was seated beside him, still holding her hands, he went on.

"In the train last night, I didn't sleep much; I suppose I was very excited — I kept saying to myself, that I was coming to *you*. I finally made up my mind to forget everything else! Oh! I have missed you so!" She thought he turned pale. "It has been so desolate without you; sometimes it has seemed to me

that there was not one soul left in the world but mother and me; that all the houses were vacant — all the streets deserted! Oh! my God, Page, the pain of missing you! But I'm going to forget it for this one day! I'm like the drunkard who has walked ten miles for a drink and sees the glass before him — I saw my happiness ahead of me — at every turn of the wheels — and I'm almost afraid to put out my hand for the glass for fear of breaking it!"

While Dave was ringing out these wild words, Page's mind was partly on him and partly on the happenings of the past two days. She tried to dismiss these thoughts, the lunches and the supper she had had as well as the people Mrs. Wilton had introduced her to. Returning the firm pressure of his hand and smiling into the famished eyes fixed upon her face, she asked brightly: "And how is everybody, Dave?"

"Mother is well," he answered quite simply, "old Aunt Martha has come home and they have fine times together!" Dave's face clouded an instant. "Uncle Ran has moved to his little country home in Amelia, and *my* large salary," a tiny laugh broke forth, "as junior member of the firm of Meredith and Lee is supporting the establishment!"

"Yes, I know," Page answered. "Aunt Constance wrote me."

"We are very fine there now," he exclaimed boyishly. "The mare has new harness and I wish you could see mother in her new black silk! She wore it to St. Paul's last Sunday and everybody stared at her and looked most approvingly at me; I was very nearly congratulated over the black silk and, Page — I saw a blue one in Cardoza's window, it looked like yards of heaven unrolled, and I just stood there dreaming

of buying it for you! Turn your face this way, let me look at you! Oh! my God, how glad I am to see you!"

A tear had sprung to Dave's eye but it quickly vanished and he continued to talk to her as though words were the overflow of his soul.

"So this is where you live!" he said, looking about him. "How I have tried to picture you day and night, always trying to place you where I could see you! But I never dreamed of you in such magnificent surroundings! I *suppose* this is magnificence! I note the marble fireplace, the statue over there, those very large pictures and, Page, I never saw so many draperies in all my life! It's insolent splendor!" He laughed. "How do you stand it? I should think a room like this would wilt a flower in a night and I would give it just one year to wilt the freshest, sweetest woman that ever rejoiced in Virginia sunshine. But now speak to me! You are here—we can't help that, so tell me everything about yourself, the people you have met—everything you do! How is the book coming on?"

"Famously!"

"Congratulations!" Dave clapped his hands. "And when you are not writing, what do you do with yourself?" His eyes strayed about. "Don't you find it very lonesome here? It seems so terribly dull and ponderous—I feel exactly as though you and I had met in a tomb."

"Oh! You never see the people in here," Page answered a bit grandly. "They are always on the go, this is merely the reception room."

"I see," answered Dave.

"People here," laughed Page, "just rush around

and tear about! There is a Mrs. Wilton here; we have gotten quite intimate. She is introducing me to her friends and I expect to go out with her a good deal!"

"Who is Mrs. Wilton?" asked Dave, a sudden sharp ring in his voice.

Page again flushed.

"Why, I don't know, Dave; people never know who anybody is here — I just met her at the table."

"And do you mean to tell me," asked Dave, "that you are becoming intimate and intend to go about with a woman of whom you know absolutely nothing?"

"Everybody does here!"

"But you are not everybody, Page!"

A ray of sunlight that parted the heavy curtain at the windows and crept in had been stealing towards them. It reached Dave's face and paused there and suddenly lit it up and fixed her attention. She had half-forgotten the wonderful, strange beauty of that patrician face — the brown, velvet skin, the dark, smoldering eyes with the fire of a race-horse in them and the light of a Dante; she had half-forgotten the lofty, intellectual brow with the soft raven hair falling on it, the high delicate nose, the fine chiseled lips, the white even teeth, the iron-like lower jaw, the thoroughbred cast of all, and for a moment it came as a surprise, and nearly took her breath away.

"Dave!" she whispered, drawing closer to him.

"Well, Page?"

"Nothing — only — you seem so different from every one here —"

"I hope so," Dave laughed, still bent on being gay.

"You're in Yankee-land you know! I have brought

you a little gift," he added suddenly, his voice changing, "will you look at it?"

His hand went to his pocket.

"A gift?" Page exclaimed.

"Yes, something I heard you say, once, you wanted more than anything in the world!"

"What is it, Dave?"

"Can't you guess? Something you said you wanted to hang on a little chain and wear on your breast, day and night, night and day, and be buried with! Do you remember?"

"You mean —"

Dave was opening a little package. He took from it a box which he extended to her. "Open it yourself," he said.

The box contained a locket; it hung on a little gold chain and inside the locket was a picture of her father, the head and shoulders of a soldier in his uniform with tiny stars on the collar.

Page was speechless with her eyes fixed upon the picture. Finally Dave bent over and looked with her. "I thought you would like it," he said. "Shall I fasten it on your neck? There, now," he bent over and kissed the back of her neck when he clasped it, "keep it there!"

Through tear-wet eyes, and looking up at him she said gently and reverently, "I will always keep it there, Dave!"

"And," said Dave, wiping the tears from her eyes with his finger and smiling into them, "love the giver! Can people kiss in this splendid room, Page?"

He was so bent on being gay that it was impossible to resist him.

"Only very formally," she answered, smiling.

And even his kiss lacked seriousness like the opening bars of a waltz that have not caught the rhythm.

"Go now and get your hat," he said, "we're going out and I want you to show me the sights! I can only remain one day. I am busy with cases of all kinds, also preparing for Fielding's trial, so we must crowd everything into one day. Can't we go to a matinée? I saw by the paper *Hamlet* is being played!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUTHERN ONLOOKER

THE day passed in a round of sight-seeing, Dave keeping up an almost madly merry mood, amused at this, cynical about something else, and finally horror-struck at Page suggesting their going to a spectacular play that was being discussed in the boarding house. He carried his point that they sit side by side through Shakespeare's master-piece.

"That ephemeral thing, Page," he had said, "a lot of senseless gibberish and scenes to catch the jaded eye! Why, I've been wanting to see *Hamlet* all my life — it's been my dream!"

And Page never forgot Dave through that performance. Alert, alive, living in the realization of a lifelong anticipation, keen about the finest point, breathless as a boy during the murder scene, and yet never forgetting her — taking her into his every emotion as a part of it.

At the close they walked down Broadway, but to her surprise she could not enthuse him nor arouse in him any special interest in the passing show.

When she commented on this, awakening from a momentary trance, he replied: "I was not seeing it, Page, I was thinking of you. I have been watching you to-day and it has rather staggered me that such ordinary scenic effects inspire excitement in you. You are an impressionist. If you are to realize your intention of becoming a novelist you must begin

to cultivate the power of analysis. You are too much overpowered by masses, crowds, noises, splendid sights, forgetting that of themselves they are nothing but symbols. To find you influenced by this appraisal of the tangible expressions of false luxury in a world where souls and bodies are bartered for gold; where everything is disguised; where the profligate and the senile, so long as they conform to convention, are considered only on the basis of their visible possessions; where every deformity, moral, spiritual and physical, may be condoned if there be *money* enough to distract one, is a shock to me. I grant all the advantages of a great city; I couldn't have witnessed that play, presented as it was to-day, and not admit it. I see, perhaps even as you do not, all the wonderful achievements of man to produce a great city like this! I am more impressed by it than you are, but I am not blinded by it. It is no place for those like you and me, who have been reared in a finer atmosphere. There is no real life here for you or me! But it's a grand and glorious place for us to come to, Page, once a year, twice a year, three times, if there is something going on worth while. But it should be taken in as a pleasure, just as we have always taken in the state fair and seen the abnormally large cows and pigs and the horse racing. But life! These people here forget half the time that they are living and that life is a thing to be respected and valued. What shall we do now?" he broke off. "Isn't there some quiet place we can go where I can sit with you, look into your eyes, hold your hand, and realize my joy in being with you! But not that parlor," he laughed. "All the time I was there I felt like a criminal!"

The street scenes about them were very gay at this hour. People were hurrying by in vehicles and on foot. Already there were lights in many of the shops and buildings and a man was lighting up the street.

Well-dressed men swung by leaving the odor of whisky and mixed drinks on the air, and many of the women's eager, restless, anxious eyes shone out like false lights to lead them astray.

Dave breathed in the odor of the men's breaths and glanced into the eyes of the women. Then he stopped on a corner and Page saw that his face had grown grim.

"Page, I swore not to ask you this! I swore to come here to make it a day of happiness for you, and if I succeeded in that, to ask nothing more! But when are you coming home? My darling, when are you coming home?"

He started forth again, and the twilight having deepened, he took her hand within his arm. Page winced a little at this; it seemed old-fashioned to her and even in big New York she might come face to face with someone who knew her.

She glanced critically at Dave, noting in some surprise the lifted head and self-satisfied manner of the man in slight astonishment.

Dave was not fashionable. The suit he wore, a dark brown one, was familiar to her, and had been for a long time; his collar, not especially well laundered, the work of some old colored woman, was not of the style worn by the gentlemen at the boarding house, or those to whom Mrs. Wilton had introduced her; his cuffs were not the latest and the old link cuff-buttons his grandfather had worn were in them. This costume, together with the watch fob that Dave

wore — it had a red seal in it and had also belonged to his grandfather — made Dave the image of some old portraits that hung on the walls of the Capitol or in Colonial homes.

Page hesitated, with a feeling of self-reproach, about introducing Dave to Mrs. Nesbit's table, and thought for an instant of suggesting as a place to be quiet, and alone, some restaurant for dinner. The thought was drowned in a burning flush. Dave was her visitor. How would it be possible not to have him as her guest, or explain away such a breach of etiquette?

So a little later these two young Virginians found themselves mounting the stone steps of Mrs. Nesbit's boarding house.

CHAPTER IX

SENTENCED TO CHAINS

PAGE introduced Dave to the boarders assembled for dinner and there was the momentary silence always attendant upon the arrival of a stranger which soon passed.

For a moment, Dave, whose idea, as Page's had been, was that a boarding house was a kind of refuge for the despairing, felt himself slightly disconcerted. He was surprised also, just as Page had been on her arrival, at the display, the number of people, and the elaborate costumes they wore.

As usual there were men and women in evening dress and the effect, he had to admit, was rather dazzling. It was easy to understand how this false show might take a hold on Page and a new feeling of anxiety concerning her filled his heart. To the superficial view there was sufficient here, in these ostensibly gay people, and their surroundings, to turn any impressionable girl's head.

The Colonel entered and Page introduced him.

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Lee," exclaimed the Colonel, putting out his hand cordially. "Miss Page has often spoken of you. She tells me that you are the son of an old friend of mine. I knew your father well, we were both on Jackson's staff — a brave soldier, sir, and a gallant gentleman! You don't look like him," he added, scanning Dave's face with keen interest.

"No, Colonel," answered Dave, rising, "I am, they tell me, the image of my mother."

"But you have his voice," said the Colonel, half sadly. "Glad to have met you, sir."

The dinner passed pleasantly, Dave under the influence of novelty and the happiness of being by Page's side, showed off to her great satisfaction.

When they entered the parlor afterwards he looked at his watch in surprise.

"Can it be possible," he exclaimed, "that it is nine o'clock! How the day has passed and yet it has contained for me so much—years might have passed since this morning! To think that I have been with you a whole day, and that we have witnessed *Hamlet*, sitting side by side, and that I have dined with you!"

The day had indeed been an event in Dave's life, and the dinner hour, during which he had easily captured and held the attention of the dining-room, had excited him a little. Dave did not know that Mr. Dalton had smiled at his boyish enthusiasm and utter naturalness, or that he had with a quick glance understood him as representative of a type that had only to be egged on to become voluble and oratorical.

As they took their seats on the sofa, in spite of the flying of time, Dave felt very happy.

The light, so brilliant before the dinner hour, had been economically lowered, and as in the morning they had the room to themselves.

For a short while there was a straggling procession of people on the stairs all making for the street. Young men who ran down lightly, over-fed middle-aged couples, descending leisurely, and young women tastefully costumed, who left the delicate odor of sachets and extracts on the air. Then the house set-

tled down to perfect stillness broken only by the distant rattle of the washing of dishes.

"Dave!" Page exclaimed presently, "I was very proud of you to-night! You were so brilliant!"

Dave laughed.

"Did you think so? I was interested. That Mr. Dalton interested me; he is the first self-made man I ever talked to!"

"Is he a self-made man, Dave?"

"Certainly. Have you not observed the coarse hands, the stumpy fingers, the workman's neck and shoulders? Why, the fellow is only learning how to handle his knife and fork, and certainly he has not learned how to address a lady. And yet he was a revelation to me. He was given a brain, and with that alone he is where he is, a man of affairs, and one of the heads of a great newspaper!"

Dave was talking as though to himself, one of those momentary lapses into self that Page was familiar with.

"He allows himself," he went on, now addressing himself to her, "no freedom in his daily life—he is a machine. I would like to see the fellow live a few days. Ah! Page, how I pity these people here, housed up like beasts, each man in his cage and fed three times a day by a keeper. At least I have never been without a home, and if I haven't owned slaves, I've owned a horse and a dog." He bent tenderly towards her. "And to think of *you* here a part of this caravansary, and of your own choice! Better our old dances, Page, in the clean sweet barn, with the smell of stacked-up corn in our nostrils and the stars shining through the rotting shingles, than this false show. And to think that I must leave you here!

If only you knew what it costs me; if only you knew how you make me suffer."

As of old, the tones of his voice penetrated her nerve centers.

"I know! I know!" she whispered, and nestled against him.

In the silence that followed there came over her a sudden comprehension of what this young Virginian was. She felt all that he stood for. She knew that a lie could no more pass his lips than that the stars could emit a poisoned flame; she knew that between him and dishonor death always stood. She had been proud of Dave at dinner, and there came over her a dim realization that he was but a spark of the old régime not yet expired, but that would *expire* in the new order of things, and he became doubly dear and of tremendous importance on that account. Her mind grew excited about him. She saw him like a soldier who has not heard of the battle lost, still holding aloft a tattered flag.

He seemed to feel her thoughts, and slipped his arm about her and drew her to him.

"Why do you persist in this sojourn here that keeps you away from my arms?" he cried under his breath.

"Am I not worth anything to you? Isn't this moment worth anything to you? Isn't my love worth anything — aren't my kisses more than —"

She freed herself from him half-petulantly, in self-defense.

"Yes, yes, Dave, but," he could feel the shrinking of her form, "but don't ask me to go back!"

"Oh! Page, *why?*"

"I don't know — I can't explain — it's the book, I suppose, that first anyway. One must be properly

situated — properly isolated to write! I have been hearing so much recently about the requirements of a writer. One must sacrifice everything and everybody to art. An artist must place himself where he can be himself to the fullest!”

Dave smiled. “Do you think any one *here*, Page, is himself? *You* can be yourself at home — not here. All the really beautiful and appealing things are there. What appeals to you here are but accessories to jaded appetites and passions, no more real than the painted scenes on a gilded curtain, only, something — God knows what — has blinded your eyes. What better environment, Page, than the universal, God-given environment — nature herself! Have you forgotten our azure heavens with their blazing golden stars? Have you forgotten our wheat fields waving like silent green seas? Have you forgotten the corn standing erect, tossing its ribbons to the breeze, the fruit trees with their faint smelling, lovely tinted blossoms, our stately magnolia lifting ivory cups to catch the perfume of heaven itself? Have you forgotten these things, and the flowers that bloom everywhere so riotously, gorgeously, and persistently, even when the snow lies on the ground, still blooming! Is not all that environment? And for the soul! Look with me down the old streets of Richmond! Can’t you almost see banners waving? Look at the words on them! Truth! Honor! Sentiment! Bravery! Courage! You want environment! Is there not environment in all that? Is it not enchantment to the pure in heart, the pure in mind — your heart, your mind! Crown it all with my love! Know that I will take sweet, sweet care of you! Have faith that with you by my side, all that you want from a material stand-

point will be yours, for it would be so — I am capable of *all* things for your sake!”

“Dave,” she whispered, “you cannot change the conditions there that weighed me down!”

“I do not want to — I want to glorify them for you! Love can do that!”

She freed herself from his embrace. “No, it would not!” she cried under her breath. “I would always feel myself a slave to the opinions of others, always tied — held down, never daring to express an idea that had not been expressed a thousand times before — that had not the sanction of usage and of time. Oh! How I tried to keep step, Dave, keep time, you never will know how I tried, but I couldn’t. If I wanted to sing it must not be louder than my neighbor; if I wanted to dance it must be the same step of all the others — no quicker, no slower! And I was yearning to do things *not* as others did them! Freedom, freedom, my heart cried! Free to live my life as no one had ever exactly lived a life before! You don’t know how hard it was to run away, with you and everyone I loved, holding me back! I do love you! I knew it that night at Fielding’s! I knew it this morning when I saw your card and my heart leaped out of my body! I knew it to-night when my pride in you was like a burning flame, but it is that very love that I have sworn not to let stand between me and myself! I will not let that love drown me! I won’t go back, Dave! You — your love — my love, can’t drag me back where every breath I draw is the breath of repression, where even the countenances of the young become outlines of duty; where the women hide pale, sorrowing faces under crepe veils; where life is respectful deference

to custom and to sorrow! I see those banners, Dave, yes, and I see the arms too weary to wave them! I see our people slaves to all the sacrifices the words on those banners entail! I held them up till my arms faltered — till I got too tired! I won't go back! It's slavery, Dave! I won't be a slave!"

Dave laughed an unexpected triumphant laugh and then bent over and put his face close to hers and she saw the triumph also shining in his eyes.

"You will always be a slave," he breathed, "always, always!"

She laughed back. "Will I? To what?"

He got up, and standing erect in front of her, folded his arms on his breast and looked down upon her. The same look of triumph smiled in his eyes that were also compassionate. "To what? Virginia!"

His voice cut the air like the sudden sound of a bird-call at midnight.

She made no reply, sitting with cat-like, shining eyes fixed upon him.

"All Virginians are slaves," Dave went on, his voice now low and hushed. "I am a slave, every man and woman born on her soil is a slave!" He bent over her, holding her gaze. "*You* are her slave! New York can't free you; the remotest corner of the earth can't free you — nothing can! You may desert her, jeer at her, laugh in her face, deny her, and her power will be a whip upon your back that will make you cry out for mercy — her tenderness will enfold you until you cry out for relief — her sorrows will weigh upon you until you cry out for breath to endure them! Her bloodshed — the blood of those who died for you will flow before your

eyes and you will hide them in the hollows of your hands! Her romantic past, her chivalry, her patience, her struggle for life, her heroism, her defeat, her splendid dignity in defeat, all will hold you bound hand and foot forever!

"You may be scorned by her for what you do to her, made an outcast by her, ignored as a thing unclean; forgotten as a thing unworthy, and you will crawl back and kiss the dust of her earth, her slave — always her slave! I must go now! Stand up, rebellious little slave, lift your eyes, put your hands in mine!"

She put forth her hands, he took them and drew her to her feet and smiled.

"You are indeed a slave, with master and mistress — Virginia is your mistress, Page, and I am your master!"

His eyes emitted a flash that was like lightning. She started and cowered a little under it. Another low laugh escaped him.

There was no sweetness in the kiss he pressed to her lips, only a sharp pain, but it took the strength out of her, and as he passed out of the door she dropped down on the sofa and buried her face in her hands, something like hatred in her heart, but her hand clutching the locket convulsively.

CHAPTER X

A SILENT PROTECTOR

WHEN Dave reached the stoop he encountered the Colonel smoking a cigar.

"You are not leaving, Mr. Lee!"

"Yes, Colonel, I must be in Richmond by to-morrow morning."

"I wish you were staying longer. I wish," and the Colonel smiled mischievously, "you were taking Miss Page back with you. The fact is, to tell you the truth, I don't like to see our girls migrating North. The first time I saw Miss Page at the table, caught a glimpse of her intense, half-astonished countenance, I wanted to tell her to pack up her trunk and go back. Pardon this — but why did her relatives let her come here alone, Mr. Lee?"

"Her parents are dead, Colonel; the voices of friends and relatives fell on deaf ears."

"Yours?" smiled the Colonel.

"Yes, even mine — I was powerless as the rest."

"It was a great mistake — a great mistake," echoed the Colonel. "It's a mistake for any Southern-bred girl to come to New York."

"I agree with you, Colonel," said Dave emphatically.

"They come up here," the Colonel continued, "to write, to teach, to go on the stage, anything serves as an excuse, and too often, I have seen many instances in Mrs. Nesbit's boarding house, since I have resided

here, the great city swallows them up. Your little friend is of a different caliber, a superior and intelligent girl; all the same, Mr. Lee, New York is no place for any unprotected girl!"

"Colonel," Dave exclaimed, "I know it only too well! I feel that I can speak to you as though I had known you all my life—you are a Virginian and you knew my father—that is enough. I wish I could have a long talk with you, I wish I could beg that favor of you, but I have not a moment to spare or I might miss my train! Colonel!"

"Well, my son?"

"It's a comfort to know that she is under the same roof with you; I anticipate no trouble befalling her—I hope she will soon be home, but at any time, if for any reason, you feel I should be by her side, will you let me know—if need be by telegraph?"

"I will," said the Colonel calmly.

Dave was getting out a card which he extended and the Colonel took. "Keep an eye on her, sir, will you?" he half pleaded.

"I will," said the Colonel, in the same calm voice.

"Good-by, Colonel." He put out his hand and the Colonel took it in a warm grasp.

"Good-by, Mr. Lee."

And Dave was off like a shot, and down the street in a run.

CHAPTER XI

THE COLONEL

ON the evening of the day that her book was completed, Page entered the dining-room flushed, elated, and triumphant. She even felt bold and had made up her mind if Mr. Dalton was in the mood to be silent, confining himself to his gluten bread and various other strange edibles that he indulged in, she herself would open the attack.

The Colonel gave the opportunity by inquiring how she had spent the day.

"In finishing my book, Colonel!" she exclaimed, and then cast a pair of flashing, defiant eyes at Dalton.

"I am sorry for you," that gentleman remarked, as he returned her glance.

"Why?" Page flashed.

"Because now your troubles begin. I would like to advise that since you have accomplished your task you had better return to Virginia."

"And may I inquire why?" Page demanded.

"To save yourself trouble," Dalton returned phlegmatically, and confined himself to pouring his pint of milk into a high glass.

"Mr. Dalton," the Colonel exclaimed, looking up from his paper, "while I agree with you that Miss Warwick should be in Virginia, it is perfectly natural that along with many others she should prefer to remain here."

"Why, sir?" asked Dalton.

"Because it is natural for humanity to sacrifice the beautiful and uplifting to fly to the market-place where there is a better opportunity for material advancement. Miss Warwick," he added, "however, may be here with philanthropic ideas as well. It may be her intention by her presence to give you the benefit of social culture."

All eyes turned quickly upon Mr. Dalton at this.

"Your colored friends are straggling up here, too, Colonel. Do you suppose they have such a purpose in view?"

"They might have, sir. The butler in my father's home could teach many a Yankee good manners!"

"We should be greatly indebted, Colonel, and to the young ladies too!"

"Our Southern girls are the flowers of the land, Mr. Dalton: you must be very careful how you speak to them!"

"Thank you, Colonel!" Page cried out nervously.

Mr. Dalton, who was transferring his especial cut of rare beef from its dish to his plate, replied without lifting his eyes.

"I am not a botanist, Colonel, and know little about flowers, but if your simile is intended to convey the idea of beauty, of frailty, of fickleness, of proud strength in sunshine and ignoble weakness in the shade, perhaps it is so. I conceive the flower of the land, though, to be a perennial that neither frost nor heat can blight, and also that possesses a beauty that is derived from its hardiness. Your flower wilts too soon and its perfume, while intoxicating, is poisonous."

"Come, come, now, Mr. Dalton," exclaimed the Colonel.

"No, Colonel Beverly," Page called, "let him go on! Let us hear all he has to say! We can stand it; only he must be just."

"I will be," said Mr. Dalton, laying down his knife and fork, "and exact. I will translate what I mean into direct English. The Southern women of New York to-day, while *appearing* all you would have me believe them to be, are in reality the antitheses of what you describe. Their naturalness and apparent childishness are masks that cover a subtlety, a selfishness, an abandonment, and a duplicity that to a cold Vermonter like myself, reared amidst solid rocks and uncompromising sturdiness, is astonishing. Their very presence here among people they hate and despise is an acknowledgment of what I say. The fact is, as you yourself admitted, they are here to prey upon us. Their beauty and their fascinations are used to entrap, and they glory in doing it, giving themselves up to the task with all the passion of their fervent nature. Family honor, even the family name they glory in, is used to advance their cause. They crave excitement, flattery, incense, adoration, decoration, and for these things they stop at nothing. I must add that their powers of dissimulation are so remarkable that, as a rule, we see in them the most innocent persons in the world!"

The entire dining-room had become breathless. The Colonel rose in his seat but sat down again. Page leaned forward, pale, with a horrified expression. Mrs. Nesbit appeared and took her stand in the doorway. Instinctively all eyes turned upon Page.

"Mr. Dalton," said the Colonel, rising and taking a military stand, "what you have said is to my mind the most potent argument that I have ever heard in

condemnation of the wrong done the South by the war. The restraint of our Southern social conditions kept our women pure and sweet and dependent. Transplanted into this alien soil they absorb its poisons and become the victims of every vile contagion. Southern men protect their women! Alas! These to whom you have referred, who, because their protectors were slain, have wandered from the fold, are truly lambs among wolves. You are correct. Without her protector the Southern woman is a pitiable spectacle! And where are their protectors, Mr. Dalton? Ask of the little tombstones that mark the soldiers' graves throughout the sunny South!"

"I am not responsible for that, Colonel," returned Mr. Dalton.

"You may not be, nor for the unhappy creatures you have described our Southern women in New York to be. But let me tell you this, Mr. Dalton, the true woman responds to the masculine demand made upon her. Does he want her an angel — she is one. Does he want her a devil — she is one. What is the demand made upon our women when they come among you? I leave the answer to you."

"The Colonel has been drinking," whispered Miss Jenkins to Page. But Page, whose startled, glowing eyes were fixed on Mr. Dalton, scarcely heard her.

"I leave it to you, Colonel," Mr. Dalton replied. "When a woman uses her charms and magnetism to call into play the carnal appetites of man, what is he to do?"

"Protect her, sir!" roared the Colonel.

Mr. Dalton said "Bah!" But the majority were clapping hands for the Colonel. Many rose at this

turn and left, so that the dining-room looked thinned out.

Page felt giddy a moment. The Colonel swayed a little, and she recognized that Miss Jenkins was right. This alarmed her, for there had come into the Colonel's face a look that she was familiar with in the man countenance of Virginia, and it meant danger.

"Our Southern women, Mr. Dalton," he exclaimed, "are sensitive, and therefore influenced by environment. The angels of Heaven, whose robes are the whitest and whose wings are daintiest, whose hearts and minds are the most alert, are the first whom a visit to Hell would smirch and make appear by contrast the most hideous. The brightest inhabitants of Purgatory, who have already been singed, being of coarser fiber, in the furnace of existence, never go to abandoned lengths. They have neither the naturalness nor the happy unconstraint of the others, and having clipped and singed wings, fly not far, not because they would not like to but because they cannot. Sudden changes of environment may bring out latent instincts that for generations have lain dormant. Throw the petted darlings of fortune upon a cold, bleak world where beauty, charm, loveliness, and grace no longer have that indefinable value given by the home, at the fireside, over the cradle, and what are the weapons with which this creature can battle with the world? When our proud stricken ones find themselves of necessity in a heartless, unsympathetic world, the primal instinct comes to the front. If she cannot conquer by force she conquers by fraud. In conclusion, Mr. Dalton, I want to say that what you have said of the Southern women in New York may be true; I don't deny it; I certainly don't admit it;

but true or not true, Miss Warwick was no more mentally prepared to hear it than the negro was mentally prepared for freedom when he got it, and if you don't apologize, sir, you're an abominable scoundrel, sir, and you'll answer to me!"

"I do at once, Colonel," laughed Dalton, showing a set of white teeth that Page somehow stood in awe of. "Miss Warwick, will you accept my most humble apology?"

Page's reply was a burst of tears and ignominious flight from the dining-room.

When she reached her room she became hysterical, and all that she could say between her sobs was: "The Colonel! The dear Colonel!"

CHAPTER XII

FAILURE

At the end of three months, Page's book had been returned by five publishers.

This, together with the life of excitement she had been leading, was wearing upon her.

She began to live in dread of the return of her manuscript. Each time it took her strength. The fifth time it arrived was during the breakfast hour.

The expressman came to the basement door. Her name was called out so that all present, including Mr. Dalton, heard it. Instinctively she glanced at him but he did not look up. Her hope that it was a package from home, whereby she might escape humiliation, died when the stentorian voice of the expressman called out the name of the publisher from whom it came.

The waitress entered with the package and a large book for her to sign her name in.

She did this with a trembling hand and scarcely able to see the line indicated by the coarse red finger of the girl. The whole dining-room seemed to center its attention upon the operation. When it was over and the girl had disappeared with the book she got up from the table and staggered as she walked to the door.

Weighed down by the package, that felt as heavy as a trunk, she climbed the steps slowly, holding with one hand by the banister.

When she reached her room she entered, closed the door, and stood in the center of it dazed.

Presently she walked over and laid the package down on her trunk. If she opened it and saw that polite printed slip she feared she would faint.

She took her seat and began to marvel at herself. Why had she ever thought of writing a book? It seemed to her now a monstrous and absurd undertaking. A laugh nearly escaped her lips, but she checked it.

Then her mind centered upon Dalton and she wondered if she could ever go in the dining-room again and face him, and all those others who had either witnessed or knew of her humiliation. A shiver passed over her and with another vivid impression of Dalton's face, the nausea returned, accompanied by a feeling of suffocation that caused her to tug at the collar of her dress.

Her eyes were staring painfully and she tried to look about her naturally, but failed. Everything seemed strange to her.

Suddenly intense hatred of Dalton diverted her; hatred of his appearance, his moods, his manner of speech, his peculiarities, the especial dishes that were prepared for him and that he criticised.

He assumed the form of a monster, created to tyrannize over Mrs. Nesbit and make her feel small and insignificant—a thing to be treated lightly, laughed or sneered at and—held up to ridicule. She felt that she would like to strike him a blow with her fist squarely in the face. But simultaneously with the thought came another that struck terror to her heart.

Might not this man help her?

Other thoughts followed this, filling her with excitement.

Her money was giving out! How she had spent money! She had not, in counting on the success of the book, realized it until now.

How many clothes she had bought! And that coat that Mrs. Wilton had persuaded her to buy because it was cheap. She had given seventy-five dollars for that coat! How did she ever come to do such a thing? God knew.

Now that she came to think of it she had been going about rather constantly with Mrs. Wilton, and somehow, while Mrs. Wilton seemed to spend the money, it was always she who paid the bills for the lunches, the cabs and *matinée* tickets. How her money had dwindled! Her eyes fell on the little account book lying on her bureau, but shifted again quickly. She would not dare to open it.

How had she gotten so intimate with Mrs. Wilton? Perhaps it was because Mrs. Wilton was always promising to introduce her to publishers and people who could help her in her literary efforts. But these influential people never materialized, and the people, men and women, whom she met through Mrs. Wilton, were self-interested and indifferent to literature.

As Page thought of some of the men and the tenor of their conversations she blushed and tears blinded her. She brushed the tears aside, however, and tried to follow Mrs. Wilton's advice not to be silly. Mrs. Wilton had said everything went in this world, and if you wanted to really live you should ignore whatever offended and just have a good time.

She had answered Mrs. Wilton that day.

Were good times, she had asked a bit wildly, the

whole of life here? Didn't hearts ever have any play? Didn't people want to be with you because it was you if there were no good times? Did they always shut you off when the tendrils of your heart reached out for a little sympathy and tenderness?

And Mrs. Wilton had laughed at her.

Good times! Page turned from the idea now in terror. Good times! She wanted to work—work!

She sprang to her feet but immediately a feeling of desperation overcame her.

Work? For what? Why?

She pointed dramatically to the returned manuscript and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XIII

HALLUCINATIONS

SOME rather reckless weeks followed for Page, during which she tore about generally at the heels of Mrs. Wilton.

It was a strange world in which she found herself at times the central figure — a world of light and music, song, movement, rush and money.

She saw enough money flying about on trays during one evening in a crowded restaurant to relieve the immediate sufferings of nearly all the people she knew at home, and the people who spent this money were as indifferent to the expenditure as were her people at home about the gold-colored leaves that fell in the fall in showers from the trees.

Life was entirely heartless and on the surface and no one seemed to have time to stop long enough to dig beneath it. Sometimes she felt that if they didn't stop rushing they would fall together in a heap and it seemed to Page that would be a relief.

There were moments when she hated Mrs. Wilton, but in the very instant some new pleasure would come up that she couldn't resist.

At times fighting these battles was wearisome and fatiguing and she longed intensely for a little rest to adjust herself. But it never came and she would often find herself, as it were, out of breath like a person on an inclined plane who can't stop himself. There seemed to be innumerable currents of wind

blowing her this way and that. If she turned from one she was struck in the face by another and she lived like a being in fear of being blown over a precipice.

She told Mrs. Wilton this but Mrs. Wilton only laughed and told her not to worry, adding that, if she did fall over she would find people on the rocks below to welcome her.

Page never actually felt herself a part of the spectacle in which she figured, nor was she. She was like a delicate white moth fluttering about it. A thought came to her that if she remained in it she might find herself one morning lying in the midst of it all, wingless and singed, as she had often seen the beautiful moths of the night before about an extinguished lamp.

These thoughts would produce vague shudders that she would attempt to belittle by careless gestures of her hands or her shoulders. She experienced so many conflicting emotions that at times she feared she might be going mad.

To cap the climax Mrs. Wilton borrowed fifty dollars of her and as usual her check failed to arrive.

This fifty dollars had made a terrible gap in the small amount she had left.

Page stood in the center of her room one morning bathed in a cold sweat. If her money gave out what then? Where would she go? What would become of her? A sudden thought relieved her for a moment. There was suicide! Yes, there was always suicide for one to turn to. The thought inspired her. She could always turn to it. But always it took her strength. If only there was someone to talk to — someone to sympathize. Someone to whom she could

explain. But there was no one. Not one person appeared to have time for anything — certainly not to listen to her.

The Colonel, yes! Page grasped at this idea for a few moments feverishly. But the idea died as she contemplated it. There were two obstacles. Two-thirds of the time the Colonel was in no condition to be appealed to seriously, and then her pride! And, besides, what could the Colonel do? Nothing!

Dalton! Always there was Dalton standing like the sphinx in the desert. She *could* appeal to him — and he might help her; tell her what to do; how to go about it to get her book published. But by no flight of imagination could she conceive of Dalton as in any sense sympathetic. She shrank from the idea of going to him, and, as it were, crying out for help to him, as from a whip-lash. She almost felt that Dalton carried a concealed whip.

Dave! Another shudder would pass over her. Dave, yes, of course! But that also meant surrender — defeat — crying out! Better Dalton! Better still, she would say this aloud — suicide! These thoughts were having their effects — bewildering effects that she was conscious of. Yet, she could not arouse herself sufficiently to change them. She had become a part of New York and New York life and sometimes, to her surprise, the strange existence would intoxicate her so that she would walk the streets triumphantly as though she had attained something. Again, if she found herself with an evening on her hands, she would feel that all the lights of the city had been extinguished, leaving her in total darkness.

While so many things happened, what surprised Page was that nothing continued. Just as the serv-

ants at the hotel disappeared, people in the boarding house disappeared. Always she was going about with new people and always she was being greeted at table by strangers, while persons who had been a part of the daily life of the house for weeks, were scarcely referred to again.

Sometimes she would wonder what became of the old people in New York. It was very sweet to be an old lady in Virginia, because there were quiet porches to sit on in summer, with flowers blooming everywhere in sight; or bright fires to sit before, in a comfortable old rocking chair, in winter. And always the young people came to tell their experiences, or bring things to show, and the children were deferential. And Page almost wished that she were an old lady so that she could be back there taking life quietly and beautifully. The old ladies here made no distinction between themselves and their juniors: they painted and powdered, and wore fashionable clothes and plumes and flowers.

One day she complained at table of the artificiality of things, how she could find nothing restful, only excitement and turmoil, and she was advised to walk in the park.

The day being an exceptionally warm and bright one, she took a car and went there. But in spite of the numerous leafless trees that had always appealed to her passionately, and all the shapely shrubs and winding paths, rocks, and natural beauty, she found little difference. It seemed to her that nature existed under protest, and she could almost fancy that the trees were chained to the spot underneath the earth and were standing there against their wills, unhappy and full of yearning for the woods and forests. She

sat a long while looking on, and observed that the wealthy rode rapidly through the park, as though escaping from it, and that in reality it was a retreat for the ignorant, the illiterate, and the despairing. Such faces as she looked into! When she left she seemed to be departing from a refuge of lost souls.

She hurried home with a feeling that happiness had flown from the world. Here was a people who apparently never looked upward for the smile of God. And she had become one of these people, a being incapable of abstract ideal contemplation, who feverishly awaited each hour for what it might bring to lead her away from self.

She was no longer able to write and passed the days as best she could. The amount of money that sped under Mrs. Wilton's hypnotic influence caused her of late to avoid her as often as possible. But this did not stem her restlessness or activity.

Sometimes she would slip into restaurants alone, order coffee, and sit and study the people and the scenes going on. The bold faces of the women, the striking costumes they wore; the sensual and gross or unhealthy countenances of the men, and the graceful movements of the shrewd and not always polite waiters, repelled but fascinated. She liked the odors of the dishes, the smell of the wines, and aroma of the coffee and chocolate. The popping of champagne corks excited her and she listened for one — it was full of suggestions, some of which she feared. There were times when sitting in such places alone, she became oblivious to her surroundings and would fancy herself an onlooker in hell, where in a few moments her feet would begin to burn. She would draw them under her, pay her bill, and walk hurriedly out, look-

ing straight ahead of her but distinctly feeling the glances directed upon her.

When she entered her room one night it was unfamiliar and she felt an absolute stranger to herself as though she were someone else.

She avoided her mirror, undressed in silence and got into bed.

She discovered presently that her heart was beating abnormally, and all of a sudden there was something terrifying to her that this living, palpitating thing stretched out there in the dark was herself. What was she? Who made her? Was she planned or was she an accident? What was the world? She remembered some diamonds she had examined the previous day standing before a shop window. They now mystified her. All those flashing things, she thought, buried under the earth, and the stars buried in the sky. Who buried them? Why were they buried there—those beautiful things? Many thousands of them were never seen—they just remained there. The brain of the Almighty astounded her. She put her brain beside God's brain and trembled like a leaf in the wind. Did anything, she asked herself, really exist or was she merely conceiving all these things—the diamonds under the earth—the stars above the earth—herself and God Himself! She touched her flesh; first with one hand and then the other; her limbs, and again assured herself of the beating of her heart. It had grown quieter. Who made it grow quieter? Who kept it going on? How could God remember to keep all the hearts beating as a clock-maker keeps his clocks going? Were there invisible attendants of hearts just as there were visible attendants of clocks? She sat up and peered about her,

looking for the attendant, and was terribly perplexed. She knew that she could get up if she wanted to and move about and that alarmed her. To be a live thing that could get up and crawl about under the bed if she liked — sit in the corners with eyes flashing in the gloom. Also she could laugh aloud if she wanted to. She did laugh aloud, once, twice, three times. Then she thought that being dead was better than sitting there laughing aloud. But dead! What was being dead? Who made you dead? And what for? Where was she? How did she get where she was? What directed her steps to this particular place? Something must have done so. The most trifling circumstance assumed gigantic proportions and became of importance.

All the while things outside were becoming more unreal than those inside, and again she questioned the reality of anything except herself. She said suddenly that anything she willed to see she could see, and began to will to see things.

First she commanded a thousand funeral processions to pass before her. "Let there be children," she cried out, "young girls, old men and old women, all being carried to their graves," and in an instant it was so. And then she said, "Open up a ball-room as broad as the ocean, dress all the people in flowers and make them dance." And that was so. And then she said, "Let the dancers vanish and the ball-room floor become the ocean and let there be a terrific storm with waves as high as this house." And that was so. And then she said, "Bring all the vessels of the waters, large and small together, and sink them before my eyes. Let the people scream and float and drown and the billows cover them, and let

the heavens catch fire and burn and roar with monstrous, mighty sound, and let burning angels drop into the roaring ocean." And that was so.

But what she could not will was the cooling of her burning flesh. She almost felt that she was on fire, and a violent pain was attacking her head and her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PLEA

PAGE's illness lasted three weeks.

At the end of that time a pale, feeble convalescent, she descended one morning to the dining-room.

It appeared to her that Dalton looked kindly at her and this brought a gush of tears to her eyes.

When he left the dining-room she followed him and as he put his foot on the step leading up from the basement hall she caught him nervously by the sleeve.

"Mr. Dalton," she asked, "may I speak to you?"

Dalton turned abruptly and faced her.

"Certainly. You've been ill, haven't you, Miss Warwick?"

"Yes, I have been quite so, Mr. Dalton."

"Well?"

His voice was so cold and sharp it cut her like a knife; also, he took out his watch.

"I shouldn't detain you, Mr. Dalton. I know you are in a hurry—but—I thought—I wondered if you would not—I wondered if you might not advise me about my book. It's come back, you know, from all the publishers and—"

"I *am* in a hurry now," Dalton interrupted, "but I will talk to you, yes! Suppose you come to my office." He got out a card and handed it to her. "Say at two o'clock this afternoon. Will that suit you?"

"Thank you, yes! Any hour would suit me! Thank you very much!"

She reached her room, weak and faint but quite elated.

The ordeal hadn't been so bad after all! Her trouble had been in trying to put herself on a level, mentally, with Mr. Dalton. She laughed at this. Mr. Dalton, the head of a great newspaper, and she a woman — nothing but a silly, inexperienced Southern girl. No wonder he had smiled derisively at her efforts! A woman needed help and the counsel of a *man* — a big, strong man like Dalton.

CHAPTER XV

THE HELPING HAND

THE great office building was disconcerting to Page, so that, as she was borne slowly upwards in the elevator, she experienced similar feelings to those she had on her arrival in New York.

Her heart beat abnormally; she failed to hear the boy call her floor; accepted his rebuke as a bewildered horse accepts the whip, and wandered through the large hall in a half hypnotic condition looking for Dalton's office.

The amount of red tape she was subjected to before she was finally admitted to his private room, did not serve to lessen her embarrassment.

When the door was opened to her she passed through it with the feelings of an actress suffering from acute stage fright. To add to this, Dalton, seated at a large roller-top desk bending over some papers, was so entirely different from the Mr. Dalton whose seat was opposite hers at the table, that he might have been an entire stranger.

For a full moment, while Page stood beside his desk, a little at his back, he did not look up, and when he did, giving his revolving chair a sudden turn, she started.

"Ah! Miss Warwick," he said, indicating a chair, and adding in somewhat curt tones, "won't you be seated?"

"Just a moment," he concluded when she had done

so, and turned to the papers he had been examining. This gave Page time to consider her embarrassment anew and become reduced finally to an almost helpless figurehead.

"And now," said Dalton, suddenly looking up and repeating his stereotyped remark, "what can I do for you?"

It was as though Mr. Dalton had entirely forgotten the appointment and the reason for it, so she recalled it to him.

"You remember, you said this morning I might call on you this afternoon in reference to the book."

"The book? Oh, yes. It's been returned to you — hasn't it?"

Page wondered if Mr. Dalton had forgotten *all* she had said.

"Returned!" she burst forth, attempting a laugh, "it's been returned five times!"

"Five?"

"Yes, and I am beginning to lose faith — that's why I've taken the liberty to trouble you about it. I thought if someone with influence —"

Dalton waved this with his hand. "Influence, Miss Warwick," he said, "hasn't any weight whatsoever with publishers. It's the story. For instance you speak of me as a man of influence. I suppose I am, in a certain sense, and yet if I were to write a poor book there isn't a publisher in New York who would handle it — that is, I mean, because I wrote it."

"I suppose, then, you think my case is hopeless?" Page inquired.

"You have not secured a publisher for your book," Dalton returned carelessly.

"No, I haven't! Mr. Dalton, do you think I

should give up — give the whole thing up? I'm almost tempted to burn the manuscript," her face flushed, "in Mrs. Nesbit's kitchen stove!"

"Oh! I wouldn't do that!"

"Well, what *should* I do? That's what I've come to ask you! To tell you the truth, Mr. Dalton, I am in a great deal of trouble. You will pardon me for mentioning this, but I came to New York against the advice of all my relatives and friends, on a small sum of money that I sold a little house for, and —" Page did manufacture the laugh this time,—"it's about giving out."

"Hadn't you better return home," asked Dalton sharply, "before it does?"

"And acknowledge my defeat to everybody? I just couldn't." She wrung her hands. "I believe it would kill me! I think I would rather die first!"

"I have no doubt," said Dalton in a composed voice, "it would all soon be forgotten."

"I suppose it would. Don't fancy I imagine myself of so much importance that it would be remembered! But *I* am the one who would remember! I would never be able to hold up my head again at home. It's *pride* — Virginia pride!"

Dalton smiled. But it seemed to Page that he melted a bit, and she felt more at ease.

"It's Virginia pride," she repeated hotly, "and Virginia pride is a very difficult thing to battle with!"

"Very well then, we will admit that. And now let us see how we can get you out of the battle. The Colonel showed me those little short stories of yours that he said had also been returned to you. He asked me to read them, in fact, and give him my opinion. I did so."

"Well?" Page asked a little breathlessly as she fixed in his a pair of eager eyes.

"I should say you have some talent, Miss Warwick, but it needs developing. Talent is a plant that has to grow and grow under proper conditions."

"Yes?"

"I don't think, if you will pardon me for saying so, that you *are* under the proper conditions for your literary development."

"No?"

"I am at Mrs. Nesbit's boarding house because I got tired of hotels and hotel fare. I have a suite of rooms there, my private bath, I order what I want and she has it cooked for me. In other words she serves my purpose as a good housekeeper. Now with you it's different."

"I should say so," interjected Page, "shut up there in that little sky-light room."

"Oh! The sky-light room is all right—it's the environment—the environment that I, for instance, am entirely on the outside of, above if you like, and that you are, partly your own fault, right in the midst of. If I were you and wanted to become an author I would first of all cut away from Mrs. Nesbit's boarding house and all the people there—Mrs. Wilton, for instance."

If Mr. Dalton had suddenly fired off a cannon she could not have been more surprised.

He saw her amazed look and continued: "Such associations only distract you from your purpose. You've been rushing about a good deal with Mrs. Wilton of late, haven't you?"

"Oh! I have—I'm ashamed of it! I haven't written a line in weeks, but, you see, I got so dis-

couraged. I believe," finished Page, making a plunge, "I've been actually reckless!"

"I believe you have."

After this remark silence fell between them, and to Page it was a very painful silence for, while numerous sentences framed themselves, they all seemed inadequate and not one would come forth.

An office boy entering and announcing a caller made her feel that she must hurry.

"Well, Mr. Dalton," she said, "what would you advise me to do?"

Dalton handed her a copy of the *New York Herald*.

"I have marked a number of advertisements here of small furnished apartments. I would take a cab, get over the ground as quickly as possible, select one and move into it — that is, if you are sincere, if you are positive that you are in earnest about devoting yourself to becoming an author."

"I *am* in earnest!" Page cried.

"Very well, Miss Warwick, you have asked my advice and I have given it."

"Mr. Dalton —" Page began.

"Well?"

"Aren't these apartments rather expensive? You see," the blush burnt again, "my money is giving out and —"

"As I told you," Dalton interrupted, "I have discovered some talent in your work. I believe under the proper conditions that talent may be made profitable. I have a little of the gambler in me, Miss Warwick," Dalton vouchsafed a smile, "in spite of my puritanical bringing up, and provided you work under my advice and guidance, I'll back your venture. If your money gives out before you have received

payment for publications, I'll see that you are not in the street."

Page sprang to her feet.

"Mr. Dalton," she exclaimed in an almost wild cry, "you think that well of my work, you really think it would be safe for you to risk something on my effort? That seems so wonderful, I can't believe it!"

"You Southerners stand in such awe of a little money invested," said Mr. Dalton, "it amuses one."

Then he rose and put his hand on his bell.

"Order a cab for this lady," he said when it was responded to.

He was holding the *Herald* and as the boy left he handed it to her.

"You can just look through this and stop at whatever seems to appeal to you as you drive along. And —" Dalton hesitated, "if I were in your place, Miss Warwick, I would not discuss my plans in the boarding house. I will speak to Mrs. Nesbit for you and as far as the rest, I would not, including the Colonel and Mrs. Wilton, take any one into my confidence. You are starting out on a new venture and too many advisers are not beneficial. Good-by. By to-morrow afternoon you ought to be located and you can mail your new address to me here."

Page was about to speak when he walked past her and opened the door.

She looked up as she passed through, trying to express to him her gratitude in her glowing eyes, but Dalton was looking over her head at the visitor who awaited him.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DREAM REALIZED

"WHERE is Miss Warwick?" asked the Colonel the following evening. "I haven't seen her at table for several meals."

"Miss Warwick has moved!" announced Miss Jenkins in a scream.

"Moved?" the Colonel exclaimed, amazed.

"When?"

"This morning! It was all quite unexpected, and I may add," Miss Jenkins was getting excited, "a bit mysterious!"

"Oh! She told everybody good-by at breakfast," Mrs. Wilton exclaimed carelessly. "She's taken a flat; she gave me the address — she's going to devote herself to work, she said, and the boarding house was not the proper *environment*." Mrs. Wilton ended by giving the dining-room a supercilious smile.

"Miss Warwick left good-by for you, Colonel," said Mrs. Nesbit, who had entered, "and this card. She said to tell you she hoped you would come to see her. She was afraid to go to your door to say good-by, she said, for fear she'd break down."

As the Colonel took the card he cast a furtive glance at Dalton.

"This is indeed," he declared, ignoring Mrs. Nesbit's remarks and scanning the card, "a surprise."

"It almost took *my* breath away!" exclaimed Miss Jenkins.

"Oh! She'll be back at the end of a month if she doesn't die of the blues in the meantime!" Mrs. Wilton laughed.

Mr. Dalton, who had finished his dinner, rose and left the room. The Colonel's eyes followed his back and then returned abstractedly to his plate.

While this scene in her behalf was being enacted, Page was moving about her little furnished flat, reveling in new emotions.

She had taken her own dinner at a French *table d'hôte* place near by, that Mr. Dalton had recommended in a note, where there was music and wine.

The place had been crowded with gay, careless looking people and Page had taken her place among them, a full-fledged Bohemian.

She smiled contentedly at how bold and self-confident she was becoming.

And why not? Was she not on the very verge of realizing her long deferred dream! And how naturally it had all come about just as though it had been planned. She was like one who had climbed a rugged road, been torn by briars and who suddenly found himself in a beautiful oasis, among blooming flowers.

The little place belonged to a writer who was traveling abroad and if she had furnished it herself it could not possibly have suited her better. It was a perfect little nest — Page had exclaimed — a dream!

Even the books had been left. Between the writing hours how she would read! It was like having a library all her own. And what beautiful books some of them were — what rare bindings!

Page opened them feverishly and read some of the inscriptions. This Mr. Ernest Noble must be a man

of cultivation and taste and certainly he had warm, appreciative friends. Page wondered if she would ever have her own place and be thus remembered and recognized.

Mrs. Wilton had suggested that she might be lonely. Lonely! Could anyone be lonely in heaven!

She laughed brightly and continued to look at things, lifting curtains, peering in drawers and even under things. The kitchen. What a perfect darling! She wished her old Mammy could come on and be with her. Wouldn't Mammy rejoice when she became famous and had everybody talking about her. Page decided the very moment she had money to beg her to come — to just *beg* her!

The next morning she was even more elated. Refreshed by a peaceful sleep, she again moved about rejoicing in everything. The hours passed rapidly.

In the evening when she had arranged the place to her taste she lay down on the couch and fell to thinking of Dalton. What an injustice, what a great injustice — her cheeks burned at the thought — she had done this man! Why, Mr. Dalton had been magnanimous! That showed Aunt Constance was right — you must never come to conclusions too quickly and never judge by appearance. How often Aunt Constance had told her that.

Aunt Constance! This gave Page a little pang but she immediately settled with her conscience by declaring when Mammy came Aunt Constance could come on a visit! Wouldn't they all have to back water and be proud of her! She would make them — that was her business — why she was in the very place! Already she was a somebody. Hadn't her work been

recognized by a competent critic, and — she should say so — quite substantially, since it was to be backed on its own merits.

Yes, she had done Mr. Dalton an injustice, that would always be her one regret. All she could do was to make up by working hard.

She would tell him so when he called this evening. He was going to tell her what she must do, how to carry out the whole plan of becoming a writer. She would tell him what an obedient pupil she would be, how she would labor day and night so as not to disappoint him.

Old Major Henry used to say if a man puts his hand in his pocket for you that was real friendship. Mr. Dalton had done that for her — that is, he had offered to put his hand in his pocket for her.

Tears filled her eyes and she lay for a while bathed in contrite yet pleasurable emotions until it was time to start to the restaurant for dinner.

When she returned she took her seat at the window and sat looking out, feeling herself in a kind of dream.

A light rain, that she had anticipated from the dampness of the night air and the sudden disappearance of the moon as she hurried home, began to fall, and a small tree, beginning to grow tiny leaves, swayed rhythmically. There was a cab opposite. It had been standing there a long while, for she noticed it before she went out. It was a kind of relief to her when two ladies emerged from a house and entering the cab were driven away.

That seemed to begin the night for her and, rising, she drew down the shades and lit the gas.

She was about to enter the adjoining room to re-

arrange her toilet in anticipation of the arrival of Mr. Dalton, when a ring on the little electric bell arrested her.

Turning with a quick gesture to the door, she opened it and faced David Lee.

CHAPTER XVII

A CLASHING OF WILLS

It was not the David Lee that Page had known all her life, but an animal man in whom ten thousand devils had been let loose.

His face was that of a corpse suddenly sprung out of the grave; his eyes were on fire; his nostrils dilated; his teeth set; his jaw was a piece of iron.

She trembled and cowered beneath his glance like a frightened hunting dog beneath the uplifted whip.

He pushed her aside and entered, looking about him as one suddenly bewildered. Suddenly a vivid flush leaped into his face and a vein stood out on his forehead. He swayed slightly and then stood gazing around like one recovering consciousness.

Finally his eyes ceased to stray about and became focused on her.

"Dave!" she exclaimed under her breath, "don't stare at me that way! You look terrible—don't, I tell you!" She covered her eyes with one arm.

He caught her wrist in a fierce grip, bent her arm down, and still stared at her.

"Don't," she repeated, "don't look at me like that! Why do you stare at me so?"

"I want to see," he spoke slowly in a labored, strained voice, between partly clenched teeth, "if it really is you." His grip tightened. "It can't be!" His eyes strayed about and again rested fiercely on her face. "I don't recognize you!"

"You do! You know it is I! Don't stare at me that way!" She was almost screaming.

"I don't know it is you! I may have gone mad!" She winced under the pressure of his fingers. He saw it and released her.

"What are you doing in this place; tell me?"

"I came here to write!" she burst forth. "I will explain everything to you! But how did you know I was here — what brought you here to-night?"

"A telegram from the Colonel brought me! But what does it matter what brought me? I am here. Answer my question or," his eyes flashed, "I tell you frankly I may not be responsible for what I do!"

She laid her hand persuasively on his sleeve. "Dave, you're excited —"

He brushed her hand aside and laughed.

"Excited!" He laughed again. "Your word is mild!"

She attempted levity and joined a nervous laugh with his. "You might be preparing to murder me!" she exclaimed and tossed her head insolently.

The gesture infuriated him and the flush receded from his face, leaving it like a dull pallid piece of yellow marble. It seemed to Page that even the eyes paled till they looked like fading lights.

"I have asked you a question, Page, answer me! What are you doing here?"

"I *have* answered you — I told you — I'm here to write!"

"Why in this place? Why couldn't you write in the place you lived?"

"It was not suited to a writer — not the proper environment!"

"Why?" His eyes flashed and a sudden paralyz-

ing anguish gripped her, as she read accusation in them.

"I have told you the truth!" she flung at him.

"And I suppose you meant to keep this truth a secret — live a lie to us all! But the Colonel, God bless him, circumvented that and I am here! I couldn't come, but I am here! I make my speech to-morrow morning in Fielding's behalf to the jury — my every thought should be on that! But when I got that telegram from the Colonel that I might be needed, with a human life at stake — I came and it seems I am needed!"

He laid a heavy hand on her shoulder, but she freed herself.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Mean! I mean what have you been doing since you came here? How long have you been here — I forgot to ask that — whom have you seen?"

"No one! I came here only yesterday and I have seen no one — I have been absolutely alone."

"Thank God!" he breathed, and his arms went out to her. "Come away with me at once, now, this instant — come Page!"

She stepped back haughtily, "You ask me the impossible, Dave!"

"Why? Why is it impossible? What is there to hold you?"

"That which brought me here is to hold me! Why should I, at a word from you, sacrifice my entire future? Why?"

"Because you can't stay here — not another day, not another hour — it's *impossible*! I will wait for you outside — I have a cab there. And, Page, do you understand, darling, you must hurry! I must take

the nine o'clock train back to-night, *must*, you know, to save Fielding from the gallows! Only my speech to the jury—I have it here," he tapped his breast pocket, "can save him! You understand, you must hurry—I will go now—there isn't a moment's time to lose! Hurry!"

He turned, staggering slightly like a drunken man to the door, but she sprang past him and put herself between it and him.

"Dave," she exclaimed, "you do not realize what you are saying! Do you mean that you expect me to leave this place that fate has, at last, in answer to my prayers, thrust upon me, at a word from you? Am I to give up this splendid chance to at last settle down to write, this great opportunity to be helped to independence—possibly to fame?"

He caught her hand and swung her to the center of the room as in a dance.

"Page," he cried, "it is you who do not understand what you are saying! Are you an angel, are you blind, or are you a wicked woman deceiving me? Don't you understand this man? Can't you see that all his promises to help you to become a writer are self-interested? Can't you see that this place is a net in which you have been trapped?"

For a moment she stared at him and then burst forth angrily: "You are doing a good man a great injustice, Dave! I know him—you don't!" She again stared at him and then approached him timidly, looking curiously into his agonized bloodshot eyes.

"It's jealousy," she cried. "I believe you are jealous of Mr. Dalton!"

For one brief instant hatred of her, and her sex, clouded his brain.

"Jealous! I *am* jealous! Why should I not be jealous! Jealous? You do not know the meaning of the word or how since I entered this place jealousy has burned a hole in my soul. I was jealous every time I thought of you sitting at table opposite that man! Jealous! Why, great God, why not, since I love you! Oh! my Savior, but it is not that! I might be jealous and if it meant my death and was for your good, even the realization of your ambitions at my expense, I could with my own hand lay yours in another man's if that man were offering you an honorable assistance! Jealous! Ah! The madness of my jealousy, but it is not that, it is you—your life! You do not know what you are doing! You do not know the danger you are in! Let me tell you that you are standing on the very verge of a precipice—I heard it and I ran to save you! Come away!"

"No! I will not! I came here with a purpose and I mean to fulfill it! I have my chance and I am not going to give it up. I have started in on the career of an artist and I am not going to forsake it!"

"It is not your career as an artist that is influencing you," he retorted in a flash, "you are influenced, blinded, hypnotized by this man! If you are an artist you can write anywhere! You could have written at home or in your little room at the boarding house! Go back there if you choose! Go back to it! I ask nothing more than that—that you leave *this* place! That is all! Will you?"

"No!" Page exclaimed in a low, emphatic voice. "The hour is at hand that I have dreamed of for years! I am not going to sacrifice it—give up my dream even for you!"

"Do you know why?" He bent down and put his haggard, tortured face close to hers. "Because all your life, your subconscious self has been subject to the beckoning finger of evil!"

"Stop!"

"I won't stop! That's why you left home and came to New York — that's why you are *here*! Even before you came to New York hadn't you sinned in the sight of God and in my sight?"

"Dave, how do you *dare* to speak to me like that?" she asked, her own eyes ablaze. "What do you mean by saying such a thing!"

"I say it because it's true! Because you received and reveled in sinful kisses from my lips — sinful because you never loved me!"

"That is not true!"

"Then prove it! Tell me that I am a liar and that you are good and sweet and pure — the angel of my dreams and all my hopes! Prove it! If all that brought you here was to write, go back home and write there! An artist can write anywhere, in an attic, in a cellar, in mid-ocean, or on the top of a mountain crag!" He waved his hand. "What has *this* place to do with the things you intended or intend to write about? What has this to do with Virginia and the sacred, tragic picture you vowed to give the world? Was this place necessary before you could dip your pen in ink for those pictures already burnt into your brain? Are these little cramped-up rooms necessary to those grand pictures? Are these hangings, these curtains, this couch, a background for them? Tear them down as you did your little house, build a bonfire of them, and if you are an artist you can write all the same! Everything in this room is a *lie*!

This drapery," he cried, leaping to a portière and tearing at it till the fastening gave way, "is a lie! This vase," he pushed one over, "is a lie! And now that I have told you, unless you return home with me, you yourself are a living lie!"

"Dave," she caught at his arm, "have you gone mad?"

"Yes, I have gone mad, but not for the first time! Over and over my love for you has driven me mad, but unless you leave this place to-night — *to-night*, do you understand, I will know that you have not been worth it!"

The striking of the clock caused him to start as from a pistol shot. He nervously took out his watch and looked at it. "I must go," he said under his breath, "I must catch that train — if a human life wasn't at stake — not even that — if Fielding's life wasn't at stake, I would not go! I would stay here, wait for that man to appear and tell him before you what he is and then kill him as Fielding Peyton killed Robert Hughes! But I can't stay — I've got to go! Page! I ask you once more, leave this place with me! Will you?"

"No! I won't! You must give me time!"

"Time with the lion growling at your door! Time! No! You must decide now, this instant!" He caught her by the shoulder. "What is your answer? It is for home and a life of honor or this place and a life of dishonor! No, you cannot protest, it has reached that point! It is that man or me, for, believe me, if I leave you here to-night, you will never look upon my face again! I mean it and I can't wait — I have *got* to go! What is it? Yes or no!"

"Dave!"

"Answer me!"

"How can I? Is it fair to put me to such a test? It is my own life I am clinging to, the life that calls me, that always has; the life that made me leave home and friends and relatives—the life of freedom and self! I can't go back to those old influences—that old repression! It means slavery to me—the enslaving of my soul—I can't do it! Don't you understand? Can't you understand? My answer is no! I won't go! I want my freedom!"

"Then have it," Dave cried in a loud voice; "take it, do with it as you like! Do with your brain and body as you will, but let me tell you this: a thousand daggers are lying in wait to plunge into the soul you are giving in exchange! Good-by, Page! You have broken my heart, now break your own!"

He turned and fled, not waiting for the elevator but tearing down the steps like a maniac.

"Catch that train for me," he said breathlessly to the driver, a powerful black negro.

"Boss," said the man, "you is too late to kotch dat train. I got to drive you to de elevated and put you in dat!"

"All right," said Dave helplessly, "do what is best for me and name your price!"

"I aint guine overcharge you, Boss!" said the man, hurrying to his seat.

"Dat gent'man got blood in his eyes," he said to himself; "I guine git him to dat train."

And the horses under a sharp lash swept into a gallop.

CHAPTER XVIII

TEMPTATION

As the door closed on Dave, Page made one leap to it, threw it open and scanned the deserted hall with startled eyes. Then she closed it and stood perfectly still with her hands clasped in front of her.

"Dave," she whispered under her breath, then in a louder voice, "Dave!"

She again stared at the door. "I've lost him — lost his love — thrown it away!"

As her voice died away the silence of the room gripped her. She glanced at the loosened hangings; the fallen vase; the scattered flowers; and her heart leaped. There was something sublime in the fury of this outraged heart that had exploded, as it were, with a great crash and destroyed things. She saw the man darting about the room as the lightning plays in a forest, bent upon destruction — striking at random. For one brief instant he appeared supreme — supreme in wrath — something to be feared. And then in another instant he was Dave, Dave who had loved her, worshiped her all his life, ignoring that love and self, flying to the friend in trouble. She thought of the speech in his pocket, a scintillating off-spring of his brain, and how with it he would tear down established laws as ruthlessly as he had torn down the things in this room, to free a guilty man and take him from prison safe — safe to his home

and those who, in spite of what he had done, would still love him!

Her throat swelled with pride as she stood erect with lifted head and triumphed in Dave.

But the next moment it seemed to her that she was suffocating. "I am dying," she said quietly under her breath, "I believe I am going to die! Dave! Do you hear me — I believe I'm going to die! Come back to me — everything is getting black before me — Dave come back to me — I want to tell you —"

There was a light knock on the door and she started, recovering from the faint that was overcoming her.

It was Dalton, she knew that, and placed her hand over her heart that suddenly leaped and beat wildly.

She was standing thus when the knock was repeated.

"Come in!" she called and it seemed to her that her voice was a scream.

Dalton entered.

He was in evening clothes, cold, placid, correct. For the first time she actually appreciated the physical charm of the man. Always it had been eclipsed by her deference to his somewhat austere personality. But she saw him distinctly now, an unusual man, from the physical standpoint alone; also a man at his best, clothed to perfection — equipped, as it were, to dazzle.

"Well," he said, advancing leisurely, "how are you getting along?"

For a full moment she stared at him and then burst forth irrelevantly: "I've had a visitor!"

Dalton glanced about him with a smile. "From the appearance of things a rather violent one, I should

say. I am very sorry. I did not wish to have you disturbed while adjusting yourself to new conditions — an adjustment so important to your future.”

Page gazed upon him surprised by his composure. “It’s dreadful,” she exclaimed, “I hardly know how to explain — I —”

“It is nothing,” Dalton remarked carelessly, “except in so far as it may have upset you. Don’t give it a thought,” he added. “Let it be an incident in your life which you must put to pen.” He smiled again as his eyes fell on the hanging draperies.

“Who was your visitor?” he asked indifferently, as they seated themselves and a new Mr. Dalton was born to Page — a man she might as well have met for the first time.

“Mr. Lee,” she answered, “the gentleman you met at Mrs. Nesbit’s!”

“Yes?” He bent forward and restored a vase to a table. “It must have been a great scene — dramatic. As I said just now, you should utilize it in a book. But for the present, I would advise you to forget it.”

There was a sharp tone of command in his words that caused her heart to leap.

“Mr. Lee is a very old friend, Mr. Dalton,” she protested nervously, “and it isn’t so easy to forget what occurred here this evening. To tell you the truth, he doesn’t approve of the independent step I have taken,” she tried to smile, “in fact he disapproves of it! I’m afraid,” she concluded, looking helplessly at him, “that I will have to give up here and return home!”

“On account of a little opposition, this incident? That is absurd. Get absorbed in your work the first

thing to-morrow morning and by evening you will have forgotten all about it. I've been doing a little editing for you," he took a package up that he had laid on the table, "on these stories."

A light broke over Page's countenance.

"Oh! Have you?" she asked.

"They are not bad. A little rewriting, a little more work, and I think you can dispose of them."

"Oh! *Do* you?"

"I do; why not?"

"Mr. Dalton, please do not tell me that — please do not suggest hope to me. I'm afraid I've *got* to throw up everything — all my hopes and dreams, and go home! I'm afraid I've *got* to!"

"That is absurd," Dalton repeated irritably.

"I know it *seems* absurd," she answered, "but —"

Dalton interrupted her. "It *is* absurd," he said with the same imperative sharpness of tone that had caused her heart to leap.

"Here now," eyeing her closely, "is the whole situation. In your own behalf you take an independent step — always a crime — in self-advancement; break away from conditions that handicapped you and enter into others that will further your aims. In other words, you come into, to put it briefly, the proper environment for your own welfare. Now what happens? An old busy-body, probably, sends a telegram; an excitable youngster, because he happens to be in love with you, and for that reason feels entitled to interfere, arrives, sees you under the new conditions, tries to coerce you, hold you to the old and finally — you will pardon this — in a rather savage fashion attempts to demolish what you are seeking to build up. Is that fair?"

"It may not be, Mr. Dalton; I don't suppose it is, but I can't be quite so independent as you feel I should be of the opinion of others." A half nervous laugh escaped her. "I am—in fact, I am afraid that I am a good deal of a coward! Since this visit of Mr. Lee, I tell you frankly, my strength to keep on has all forsaken me. I'm afraid I haven't got the courage to—well, keep it up!" Her lips trembled.

"Keep what up?" Dalton asked, his voice disconcertingly sharp.

"This!" She waved her hands. "It seems I would just be flying in the face of everybody at home and disgracing them!"

Dalton laughed.

"It *really* is so!" she added apologetically.

"You must not think of others, but of your work." His voice was calm now, persuasive even, and again Page wondered if it really was Mr. Dalton. "The artist's life is not an easy one. The ability to live it, however, comes with practice. You must live for others and the world, Miss Warwick, or for yourself and art. You cannot do both. I thought you had decided all that. I thought it was understood when you came to me for advice and agreed to follow my instructions. I am not a man who wastes his time, Miss Warwick, or one to be trifled with."

He cut her with a sharp glance of his eyes, one that she was familiar with, and the color receded from her flushed cheeks.

"I understand that, Mr. Dalton, and I am terribly embarrassed and distressed!" She sprang to her feet. "But I must go home."

A slight sneer crossed Dalton's lips as he imperatively motioned her to her seat.

"When you moved into this place," he said as she obediently took it, "you left your past behind. You may not have realized this, but you did. Your life in Virginia was lived out when you left there. Return and try to take it up again. Try to enter into those old sentiments from which you fled and you would soon wish yourself back."

He paused, holding her eyes magnetically and then continued: "Never try to put your fingers on your past—shun it. The only way to attach value to your past is to let it alone. It is only a delusion that tries to enslave you in order to cheat you out of your present. The past is consolation to but one thing—failure! Those who have failed may attempt to live in their past! You have not failed yet; before you, as your only consideration, lies the future!"

A dark flush had come into his face and his command of words that had made him a power through his pen, now burst from his lips and began to pour like a deluge in her ears.

All that she sacredly revered was scoffed at. He laughed at Virginia. She was above and beyond Virginia. It was this that made her escape to find herself thus far on the road of her destiny. The time was ripe for her to rejoice in herself and an artist had no right to look back. If she did she was bidding good-by to herself.

Suddenly he rose to his feet and Page had never listened to such words or such convincing arguments as continued to flow in torrents from this suddenly impassioned, but hitherto morose, man. Nor had she ever seen such eyes as his had become! Wicked eyes, cruel, fascinating, compelling.

"Your past is a dream," she heard him saying

finally, "only a dream! Granted that the life here — the life of a great city is also a dream — the phantasmagoria of the self narcotized — you cannot so easily escape! You would miss it, the great kaleidoscopic dream would haunt you; you would miss it and all the life here! You would miss the noise of the street-cars, the elevated, all the sounds that people hate yet cling to! They would be in your ears and all the city's blinding lights would shine day and night, night and day, in your eyes! You would think of the theaters, the restaurants, this place in which you now are, and—" he paused, "you would think of *me*! From this distance and under pressure of excitement you think you can return there. I tell you that you cannot! Your past is a beautiful poem to you, beautiful because forever beyond your reach. It has dared to intrude itself to-night like an old song. Try to spend your life listening to old songs and they would fail you! Your future is here in *my* hands!"

As he ceased speaking, his words seemed to have crystallized into golden spheres that swung about her head issuing a drowsy incense.

She grew dizzy and all of a sudden felt the charm of the life he had described take possession of her. There was a moment of absolute weakness when Dave, home and all the things she held sacred slipped from her. She saw only the present moment and the man before her, his eyes aglow, tempting her to forsake the old for the new.

A shudder passed over Page as she recognized that a passionate lover confronted her.

"Mr. Dalton," she asked timidly, "are you asking me in this sudden manner to be your wife?"

"My wife!" Dalton exclaimed. "My dear girl, don't you know that I am married?"

"Married!"

For a full moment they gazed into each other's eyes. Then Dalton broke the silence.

"I am married, yes. I thought you knew it? Ten years ago my wife and I separated harmoniously. She lives in Europe where our children are being educated. But what have these domestic conditions to do with you and me? We have our *own* lives to live!"

"Ah!" Page gasped, as she recoiled from him.

They stood another moment in silence and then she approached him stealthily and looked up into his face.

"Mr. Dalton," she breathed, "how have you *dared?*"

"Dared what? To offer you my help? My interest in your work, and," he bent his face to hers, "my love?"

"Love!" she exclaimed, springing away from him, "that would be my ruin! I know now why the Colonel telegraphed my friend, and I know more — far more! I know now what was meant by the danger of my coming to New York alone! In one brief instant, I have learned what it is for a girl to break the chains that bound her to conventions and attempt to stand alone. And —" her voice was a scream, "you tempted me — something in you, to-night, tempted me! But the temptation died at its birth, and rather than through an act of mine bring dishonor on myself and on my sacred state and those who love me there, I would cling to the stake and be burned alive!"

"You play your part well, girl!"

"Part! What part? Do you mean to insinuate that I knew your intention? That I came to this place knowing it—with my eyes open? Do you mean to say that?"

"Of course you knew!"

"My God!" She reeled and caught at the edge of the table but released it and steadied herself.

"Of course you knew," Dalton repeated, "but you've broken down—you haven't the courage of your convictions. Come, don't be silly. Don't sacrifice your future to a few old sentiments, the same kind that sent your soldiers—heroes you called them—into the jaws of death and that would make of you a slave! That kind of a thing is following a mirage—it's all a myth. I offer you *reality!*"

Aflame, her breast heaving, her eyes, in which all the tenderness was lost, in a blazing fire, she faced him like a savage animal at bay.

"Mr. Dalton," she cried out, "sentiment may have wrecked us; there may be no such thing as sentiment! Love, bravery, courage, even honor, may be myths, but there is one thing in this life that is not a myth, one thing and one alone in which sentiment does not enter; one thing which man or woman, with or without sentiment, can have or throw away—his or her position in the world! You want to keep yours and rob me of mine! Slavery! Is there any such slavery as you offer me, a prisoner with the door of the world shut in my face! Ostracism! People I know would pass me on the street and not speak to me; doors would be closed upon me! If one I loved were ill—dying—I could not be by the bedside—the dying would turn from me!"

"You're excited," said Dalton calmly, "but," and

the wicked light shone in his eyes, "may I add, superb? Good-night. I will see you to-morrow. In the meantime, try to sleep, get your composure and —" he paused, "your reason."

He turned from her, walked leisurely to the door, passed out and closed it behind him.

For a moment Page stood gazing as in a trance on the closed door.

Then she started, her form grew tense and her eyes emitted a kind of radiance.

"Home!" she breathed, and closed them.

BOOK III

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

VICTORY PROCLAIMED

THE hours of inaction over, keyed up to the extremest point of exaltation, fired by all her return would mean to Dave, and with the fragile face of her Aunt Constance shining before her, the following morning Page entered the train.

As it began to move, the dramatic instinct, natural to her, became aroused.

"Home! Home!" she exclaimed under her breath, while her throat closed and she actually saw a thousand pairs of hands extended to her in greeting.

Her recent past seemed to fade away with the first turn of wheels and there rose before her a curtain that was like an old faded tapestry of Virginia. All the family portraits passed before her eyes; all the people whom she had known, some living, some long dead. Suddenly the rose-bush that her grandmother had planted burst into full bloom, and beyond it she saw armies of soldiers, with bayonets flashing, walking straight into the jaws of death for Virginia's honor.

For a moment it seemed to her that Dalton was standing before her and her entire body burnt as though she was being consumed by shame.

She freed herself of the vision and as the train, now at full speed, rushed homewards, things long

forgotten, dramatic impressions of her childhood, began to take shape and hold her attention.

A story that had gripped her youthful imagination sprang to her mind. It was the story of a young deserter. The horrors of war, the explosion of cannon and shell, the whizzing of bullets, the dead and dying lying about; the dismembered; the smell of blood; the sight of blood, had appalled this youth and he had fled from the battleground, in the dark hours of the night, and kept on until he reached a strange city. There for three days he gave himself up to riotous living. On the fourth his conscience awoke, and with the frenzy of a madman he started forth to return to his regiment. On the way he was met by his comrades and shot. Oh! If her fate had been this, to be met on her return by glances of scorn that would be worse than pistols! She must hurry and be back in her camp, don her uniform, and live and die by her colors.

Her face betrayed these emotions, her hands were a bit unsteady in performing their duties for the ordinary comfort of the trip and her eyes shone.

"Dave! Dave!" she cried under her breath and choked down happy tears.

But one thing stabbed her to her heart. She was returning almost empty-handed. Her money had been spent and on *herself*! The fire of shame again consumed her as she went over, in self-abnegation, all the tales of poverty and distress that had come to her during her absence in letters or the newspapers. In her narcotized condition they had made little impression on her; been accepted simply as old stories she had been hearing all her life; now the true significance of them appalled her.

A certain farmer's cattle had all perished during the winter, which had been a severe one, of hunger.

Awful descriptions were given her of how the poor emaciated things were raised to their feet with the hope that they could stand starving until the grass came up out of the earth. Sheep, from not being nourished, froze; horses, with barely enough food to keep them alive, were kept at work. The thought of these poor, suffering, dumb beasts made her feel that her flesh was being dragged at. Poverty, poverty — merciful God, and she had spent her substance upon herself! There were other tales that came up. Children had needed shoes, men had needed overcoats, women had to remain indoors wrapped in old shawls for want of underwear.

As she recalled these things, she saw them — the little ragged feet, the men without overcoats, tightly buttoned up, facing the wind. The women shivering for want of underwear.

Exaggerating her own selfishness a new fear assailed her — that Dave had ceased to love her!

With this thought the stoppage of the train at stations made her nervous. She wanted to see Dave quickly, wanted him to know of her return and of all she was prepared to do! She went over their scene in the flat in actual terror and fancied him turning to Nina as he once swore he would. This idea madened her and she saw Nina as a shining angel and Dave kneeling at her feet.

She untied the veil about her throat and threw it back to breathe freer.

Presently as the train sped along through spring visions, the whole plan of woman's life seemed revealed to her. It lay in sacrifice — surrender of self.

Her mind flew to a hundred Virginia homes and in every one she saw the plan conformed to. Tired, patient women, unsupported by material comforts, did not complain and beyond the sadness or sorrow there rested, also, in the eyes of these women, the calm, steady light of content. In not one pair could she find the shadow of an awful fear such as she had seen in Mrs. Wilton's on the day when she had cried out about her vanishing youth. And strangest of all in the old and faded eyes the light shone the brightest. She continued to look on all these Virginia homes in a kind of bewildered fascination.

In each one there was a man standing guard at the portal. Sometimes it was a husband, sometimes a brother, but always a man for the woman to lean upon — put her burdens on; a man who even though wearied unto death would never forsake her, always a man ready to go to his death in her protection, or for a breath of slander breathed upon her name. A man to work for her till he dropped, to stand by her side and uphold her even though she had become a thorn in his side.

The thought stirred her tremendously. These men were heroes. There was something uplifting and poetic in a plan of existence where every home, no matter how lowly, how humble, how poverty-stricken, was a kingdom with a king, who placed his queen upon her throne and saw to it that she was honored; that no harm came to her; no word of disrespect, either from the inmates or the stranger within the gate. Always a man standing between her and these things; a man who often times grew blind, year by year, in worship, so that when old age came, he still saw his queen as a youthful maiden to whom he paid boyish

compliments that brought to the old, peace — to the young, hope.

Page knew that she could not deny these facts; she had lived in them all her life! In this illumined moment it seemed to her God's plan that could no more be destroyed than the rocks of the mountain or the sands of the ocean. This thought of nature took her, with a bound, to the forest where the wild beasts obeyed the same law. She saw the lioness and her young peaceful and contented in the lair, while the male stood guard ready to give up his life in their protection. Dave was like this lion waiting to stand guard over her and the baby that would lie in her arms. She half lifted her left arm, crooked her elbow, and looked down with her fine imagination into a miniature face of Dave and a little head covered in silky hair. She felt a choking in the throat and a low nervous laugh escape her and caused a couple opposite to glance at her.

Then the train rolled into Washington and something happened that made her pale and leap from her seat with one hand pressed breathlessly to her heart.

It was the sharp crying of a little army of news-boys — a triumphant, shrill yelling, resembling the old rebel shout over a battle won.

Falling over one another they flocked to the windows of the coaches, as the train stopped, and began running through them.

"Fielding Peyton cleared of murder!" was what she heard through a confused brain.

"Fielding Peyton free! David Lee's great speech to the jury!"

This message screamed into her ears, this reverberating yell, coming upon her mood was a clarion call of

encouragement and hope — inspiration for the future!

She went blind a moment, and pressed her palms to her eyes to restore her sight. She remained thus, bewildered, half-conscious, trying to collect herself.

And all the while the cries of the boys continued to hammer on her ears.

“David Lee’s great speech to the jury!” Over and over these words, now close, now at a distance, as the boys fled through the coaches.

With trembling hands she found and opened her purse, and handing a boy a dollar, which, to his amazement, he was told to keep, she made her purchase of half a dozen papers.

The train started; the boys were running away from it. She seated herself and opening one of the papers saw the big headlines that had been echoed in her ears, and below them Dave standing erect, head slightly forward, the right arm tensely held aloft, the fingers of his hand scattered.

She tried to read but her excitement increased, she was trembling violently and could only hold the paper clutched in her hand.

She stood up a moment; she wanted to declare herself — tell who she was, and that she was on her way to David Lee!

CHAPTER II

SILENT REMINDERS

WHEN Page stepped from the brightly lighted parlor-car it was ten o'clock and the blackness that enveloped the old station was a momentary surprise.

With her satchel in hand and trembling slightly from excitement she made her way with rapid steps and shining eyes to a high gate that was being rolled aside.

The man performing this duty was an old Confederate soldier. Page wanted to drop down on her knees before this erect, faded figure and receive his blessing. But with a half-smile and swift tender glance into the sad, watery, blue eyes she passed on.

Another tall, gaunt looking man, with one arm, was in the baggage department, which presented itself wide-open to her left, and there were a few burly negroes handling trunks. Page heard him speaking kindly to these negroes, who had caused the loss of his arm, and it seemed very beautiful to her. Her eyes also rested in his as she fled past.

When she reached the waiting-room of the station she noticed an old dilapidated sewing-machine in the corner, and recalled quickly a stout woman who had care of the ladies' reception room, and who was always allowed to sew between train times. This woman mothered all travelers, and little children and babies often rested — to give mothers rest — on that great bosom. It sent a thrill through her. She

paused a moment in the center of the room looking about her.

A party of people, a man in high top-boots that were smeared with red clay, a farmer with a cadaverous wife, seven children, one a baby in the arms of a little negress of about eleven, were eating from a basket. She saw the old familiar buttermilk biscuits and smelt the ham. On another bench, a party of negroes in grotesque costumes sat very erect; some sleeping, some nodding, some staring. These people were waiting for a train that Page remembered was, as a rule, two or three hours late.

The sight of them made her feel safe and happy. They were as familiar a part of the whole she was returning to, as the frame houses and cabins in which they lived and the old wood piles about them. She could almost see this farmer hauling wood for the winter; the oldest boy cutting it up and the white chips flying. How brave and sweet these simple lives were! She passed quickly through the station to the sidewalk surprised to find how warm it was — the difference in temperature the few hours on the train had made. It was already summer heat here and the stars shining so luminously in the dark purple azure were yellow as gold.

Other familiar sights greeted her. Groups of negroes were sitting or lying about the pavements or doorsteps and the old dingy 'buses were lined along the sidewalk in the same manner that she had seen them all her life. The negro drivers, whip in hand, were calling out the names of the hotels they represented with the same old pride. Page heard the refrain "Exchange and Ballard" that she had always heard croaked by an enormous negro, who had a voice

like a frog. His name was Ephram, and in her mind Ephram had always existed. Two men got into Ephram's 'bus — Ephram was always the victor — and he mounted the box and drove away in triumph.

All the other 'buses followed empty, the wheels making a terrific noise over the cobblestones. Page listened to this rattle that affected her like a familiar piece of music suddenly performed for her benefit. She felt that everything was for her benefit as she entered an old hack and gave the driver her Cousin Edmund's address.

As he was closing the door he peered into her face.

"Ain't dis Miss Page?" he asked, and Page recognized Sam.

"Why, Sam!" she cried in a husky voice, as she put out her hand.

"How you do, Miss Page?"

"I'm well, Sam, and I'm so glad to see you! How is everybody?"

"Everybody right hearty, Miss Page! Mr. David been goin' erhadde powerful heah lately, en ter day he done fair sot Richmond crazy — he done save Mr. Fieldin'! He done sot him free! Folks say when Mr. Fieldin' heard it, he jess staggered up to Mr. David and fell in his arms callin' out Mother! Mother! Mother! Dey say how he been fearin' powerful how if he got sont up all dem women folks at home mought starve! Mr. David brought him home wid'm and when dey done got through supper he tole me to hitch up de buggy and him en Mr. Fieldin' started off fur home."

The news of Dave's absence caused a momentary shock, but collecting herself she said eagerly: "Drive

me to Cousin Edmund's, Sam, and tell your mother I'm home and she must come to see me!"

"She sure be glad to see you, Miss Page," answered Sam, chuckling as he closed the old hack door with a bang.

As the ancient vehicle rolled noisily up the street, Page found herself confronted by Dave's absence and like an avenging pain she saw Nina's face with its radiant charm. She swept her arms across her eyes and shut it out, half-wildly calling upon her faith in Dave. Her ecstasy returned and in the cracking of Sam's whip, the noise of the wheels on the cobblestones, and the jolting of the carriage, came echoes of the past that turned to pæans of joy.

Peering out she peopled the deserted sidewalks with familiar figures and entered with a bound the dilapidated homes, demanding of the inmates welcome. Several times her eyes filled and a light laugh escaped her.

The languorous heat, the silence, the dim lights burning in the halls, the red ones of the tiny bar-rooms in squalid streets, all affected her dreamily.

As she passed a tobacco factory the fumes of the molasses-cured tobacco penetrated her nostrils and made her almost cry out with sharp recognition.

"Home! Home!" she cried and it seemed to her that if this solitary drive did not end quickly, her emotions would bear her away heavenwards, before her loved ones knew of her return. But at this very moment the old carriage finally came to a stop. A little black robed figure seated on the top step of the porch, hearing her voice, sprang down the steps to the hack, and with two little emaciated arms caught her in an embrace that almost crushed her.

"Page ! Page! Darling Cousin Page, at last, at last!" cried Emily, and their meeting was as of the dead who have suddenly met on brighter shores.

"Oh!" said the little voice again as they stumbled up the steps, "how I have needed you."

"Emily! Emily!" Page cried, dropping her satchel on the porch and facing her, "you have needed me! Tell me that again!"

"I have, I have," exclaimed Emily, "God has answered my prayer!"

They fell again into one another's arms, and then, the rest of the family having retired, they mounted the steps in silence, to the third floor where Emily's room was dimly lighted by an old lamp that was out of order; the little rocker, in which Page sat, was almost bottomless, and the pale colorless old three-ply carpet was worn in holes. But as the friar sees his bare cell furnished in splendor, so did she see splendor in these old things.

Emily's bed, a high teester, reached by ascending a flight of mahogany steps, was like a holy altar beside which, humble and with bowed head she might kneel to say her prayers, while the other things, old unto death, never repaired, or replaced, just falling or standing, were grim but passionate reminders of a sacred past.

In the center of this old room, another outburst of emotion on the part of the two girls, another embrace and silence fell between them.

But when the old smoky lamp had been extinguished, however, and they were half-lost in the great bed, they talked a long while in low hushed voices of Page's return and of all the things dear to their hearts.

Page learned that while Emily's mother was bear-

ing up under everything bravely, her father was failing in health and no longer capable of leaving the house to attend to business. The boys were at work but she and her mother were thinking of taking boarders. Aunt Constance having grown too feeble to get up in the morning, Emily took her breakfast to her and Page must not go in to see her until she had had her coffee and been prepared by Emily, for the least excitement prostrated her. Page must also be prepared for a change in Aunt Constance's appearance. And then after a long silence Emily said in a low voice, "You have heard, Page?"

"About Fielding? Yes, I got the papers in Washington."

Emily was silent a while and in a voice tender and full of awe, she called softly, "Page!"

"Yes, Emily?"

"They say that Nina is going to die."

"Nina!" Page exclaimed, throwing down the covers violently and sitting up.

"Yes," Emily answered, also sitting up, "Dr. Moncure told mother."

"Don't, Emily, don't tell me! It can't be! Nina! No! No! I tell you it can't be! She is the most alive thing on earth!" She burst into hysterical sobs, wrapped her arms about her knees and buried her face in them.

After a while she looked up and her expression alarmed Emily. "I tell you," she cried, choking her sobs, "it can't be — not Nina!"

"Page," Emily answered, "the Nina you knew is already dead. It was the shock, they say. They all stood it except her and she just went to pieces in a perfectly mad way all in a day. You see," she paused,

"she loved Fielding so! She came to see us about a month ago; she had been staying at Cousin Hennie Bland's and going to the prison daily. I opened the door for her and I didn't know her — she was so thin and white, her beautiful eyes were like hollows, she staggered as she walked — I had to lead her to a seat."

"Don't, Emily," whispered Page, "be quiet — I can't stand it!"

She thought of Nina's face that she had seen while in the hack and again put her arm over her eyes to shut it out.

"Emily!" she cried in a hushed voice a moment later.

"Nina will not die! *I* am going to her! I'm going to nurse her and get her well! I can — I *know* I can! Thank God I'm home in time!"

"Can you think, Page," said the small tremulous voice at her side, "what all this has been to *me*?"

Page turned suddenly and looked at her, this little figure that was Emily's ghost.

"Yes, yes; come into my arms, you poor little thing!"

As Emily sprang forward and clung to her, Page fell to sobbing again, quietly this time, while trying to pour some comfort into this little creature scarcely more than a child, who was bearing the burden of a great tragedy — a tragedy of her times.

After a while they lay down in silence and Emily, tired with the day's duties, comforted by the return and presence of Page, fell asleep.

But Page could not sleep. All night she lay awake in the great bed which became finally like a ship bearing her along on placid waters.

At five o'clock she heard an alarm clock; later the quiet opening and closing of the front door. She stole out of the bed and went to the window. A slight young form, that she dimly recognized as Robert, the youngest son in the family, appeared and then disappeared, half walking, half flying around the corner. On this vanishing form, starting forth at break of day, Page had no doubt the family greatly relied for food. And all through the city this was so while women slept!

One brief thought of Dalton caused a shudder to pass through her and she hastened back to the side of the bed. There she stood for several moments looking upon the wasted features of Emily, framed in a wealth of scintillating hair that alone persisted in proclaiming her youth.

"And all the while," she breathed, while the tears choked her, "she was needing me!"

Stealing softly into bed she slept.

CHAPTER III

INTO THE FOLD

RECALLING the happenings of the next morning, the exclamations of joy, the glad ring in the voices, the tears and smiles and embraces, it seemed to Page that a religious ceremony had been enacted, through which she, the strayed sheep, was welcomed to the fold.

Sam had already spread the news of her return and the children had also been sent hither and thither, one of course to Cousin Betty, with messages.

True to her word, Emily prepared Aunt Constance and not only did she prepare her but she dressed her for the occasion putting a white rose under her cameo breastpin.

When Page entered the room and saw her thus, fragile and pure as the rose she wore in her honor, seated in a large armchair, her slender hands ecstatically clasped, her famished, eager eyes lit up in rapture, her whole face shining with celestial light, she ran forward with a cry, and fell on her knees at her feet.

And when that meeting, which Emily arranged to take place alone, was over and they all crowded in, Cousin Betty embracing Page and scolding her in a breath, Cousin Mary smiling like a madonna, the children with flowers, culled from their own little patches of earth, in their hands, even Emily with a tinge of color in her pale cheeks, Page felt like almost cry-

ing aloud, "Joy over the sinner that repenteth," for she felt that that was what she was.

The day passed like a festival, the life in the household continuing each moment to gladden and soften her contrite heart.

With what love and reverence the children had kissed their parents before breakfasting; how adored the mother was by the two boys who went out day after day to tasks beyond their strength for her sake. With what suppressed tears she kissed the blackened hands of her brakeman boy; how tenderly she had put his dinner aside for him and when evening came fixed — he was the studious one — the lamp and book in his corner that he might have a few hours' rest and happiness before going out to his duties. And how she ministered to the feeble, ailing husband, whose usefulness was over, kneeling at his feet when she took him his food and looking up adoringly into the poor, blank, failing countenance. And Emily, her blighted one! Oh! The embraces between these two — the understanding!

These people, who were in no way remarkable, grew remarkable: she gazed on them in awe and took their tenderness towards herself humbly. And the next door it was the same and the next, and so on through all the streets it was the same. Love was the keynote; it was the cementation of love that kept the very breath in peoples' bodies. And even the lowliest received some kind of tenderness — and not one was deemed as of no importance. The oldest, poorest man, or woman, down to the youngest, poorest child, was loved and cared for by someone. The idiot boy, who lived a few blocks away and struck his mother in the face when she ministered to him, was loved by the

mother who blamed herself that the stress and anxiety under which she had labored during the war, when she was carrying him, was the cause of his blighted life. This mother wept over this son, who had a strange vacuous laugh, and always struck at her, and she was tender to him. There was no one who was not loved by someone! She could not find one person who lived entirely for self or whose life was not a brave struggle, not only for self but for each other. She saw meals being exchanged, trays sent about from one house to the other, and it seemed to her that no one was interested, even in his own food, unless partaken of by another.

If only Dave were not away! If only he were here that she could tell him all that was in her heart. Perhaps that would be too much joy, so she must be patient and wait while Dave performed his part for others.

The thought of Nina alone disturbed her, but even in that thought lay a new-found duty.

On the afternoon of the second day she felt the desire to walk past old familiar places, to see if certain bushes, that she remembered, had flowered; if the trees had the same appearance; if the sun cast the same shadows.

So she stole out alone.

It was impossible, however, to avoid encounters and every few blocks a new greeting, from both white and black, awaited her. "Back to God's own country! Knew you couldn't stand it there!" or "'Fore Gaud, if dar ain't Miss Page!" were glad sentences that rang in her ears, keeping the light in her eyes and the smile on her lips.

On the outskirts of the city she passed a beautiful

old yard, where the children were crowning their queen of May.

The sky was so blue, the grass and trees were so green that the dome of the world looked like a suspended turquoise and its base a glittering emerald. The sun flicking through the trees to the ground was like fallen topazes.

In the distance a rough throne had been built but the crude work was hidden beneath flowers so that it was a floral throne. Groups of children in gauzy apparel, covered in tiny gold and silver paper designs and carrying flowers, looked like little fairies. And nothing that Page had ever seen seemed so beautiful as this simple spectacle. She walked on. How sweet it had all been! And some of the faces of the mothers as their own children or child appeared! She would never forget them nor how the sun shone. It seemed to pour down through the trees like wine and the fitful breeze touched one like light feathers.

Suddenly as she moved away a message, as though straight from heaven, came to her. To live here in peace she must put aside all thought of self and become as one of those little children, each one bearing a flower to make a perfect whole!

A kind of passion-drama unrolled and many beautiful scenes passed before her eyes as she walked along beneath the pale green trees that fantastically shaded the sidewalks. At last she fancied she saw ahead of her a perpendicular hill up which an army of people, men and women and children, were all climbing. She noticed that many were old and feeble and wore ragged clothing; that some were crippled, and that others were carrying heavy burdens. But no matter how old or feeble or lame, or how heavy the burden, not one

hesitated to take his place with the rest. She looked up this steep hill, her eyes following this crippled army into a land of glory, and with a suppressed cry herself fell in line.

She was so happy then that all things took new form and color in her brain. That which had distressed and caused her to flee, now held her captive.

The wounds and disfigurements of the old soldiers that used to shock her were now the concrete manifestations of patriotic ardor, heroism, self-denial, magnanimity, patience, saintliness — all the virtues that would one day entitle them to the world's apotheosis. The starving cattle of the winter before now seemed to her like a sacrificial offering to God on an altar made sacred by the precious blood of countless human lives. The coarse clothing worn by the men shone in her eyes — the wailings of her people were glad pæans.

New York with all its wealth, splendor, and magnificence, all its untold power, came up, and with beating heart she pitied New York. It was blind and dumb in all its splendor, a great palpitating soulless monster from which she had escaped. She thanked God with clasped hands and uplifted eyes that she had escaped; that in spite of all she had been through she had returned, unscathed, and could still hear the silent voices of things, catch the after-glow — the violet tints.

Suddenly she discovered that she had left the city's limits. This did not deter her and she went on, trying, however, to reduce her pace by assuring herself that there was no cause for her to feel excited about anything. But her highly sensitive condition refused to be appeased and her thoughts continued inflamed.

The brooks she passed flowed over golden pebbles, the hills were monuments of emeralds! An old home deserted and in ruins surrounded by a rotting fence blinded her with tears.

There was scarcely a trace of cultivated land, but the sunlight over all made even barrenness beautiful. She looked about her inquiringly. Somewhere nearby honeysuckle must be already in bloom. How intensely sweet it was! Flowers and vines and weeds held high carnival. Joyously demoralized, they flourished in rapturous abandonment, wrapping themselves about trees and fences and old benches and discarded cooking utensils, laughing and reveling in their riotous disorder.

The light over the land was the reflection of her own soul, so that the earth seemed rejoicing for her. Everywhere it was bursting to give forth to her eyes beautiful colors, to her nostrils, sweet odors. A mocking-bird broke into song and she stood and listened, allowing the melody to pervade her. Never had she heard so beautiful a sound.

When silence came she walked on again bathed now in the light of the setting sun. For a moment, in the fierce glare of the Western sky she seemed to see New York again glittering, and Dalton with the sneer on his face beckoning to her. But immediately the scene changed and she saw only what was about her.

Presently she reached a clump of pines and stepped inside and stood on the carpet of brown pine-tags still watching the setting sun.

What a chirping of birds there was — a regular orchestra. She listened, hoping she would hear another mocking-bird. But none came and the sounds of so many was confused, a kind of twittering, with

an occasional clear note, and even those sounds were growing fainter — some dying away. All the while the sun continued to set in splendid colors. It was like being a little girl again to stand there watching it.

The night came slowly; the sky changing very gradually from a bright gold to a violet gray that cast a light, monotonous and melancholy, over the bare immovable fields. Beyond one of these fields, to her right, a road ran and Page saw a wagon appear upon it and move slowly along like a shadow. She watched until it disappeared.

After that it grew dark more quickly so that soon only things very near her were distinguishable. The tops of the pine trees that had been so green were now quite black; the odors had become saturated with dampness and there was not even the twitter of a bird, only a drowsy chanting of the insects that had all awakened to the night. At last a full moon pale and chaste came lazily in sight. It rose slowly above the fields and flooded them with a pallor that was like a fall of snow.

“How beautiful!” she murmured in a rapt voice.

As though to give her answer, a sudden warmth enveloped her; a hot wind had arrived from somewhere. It was like a passionate embrace and Page responded to it, melting as though in a lover's arms. She became charged with a great love for this familiar warmth and for the earth upon which she stood — the soil of Virginia. The heat comforted her and the earth began to draw her to its breast until finally, beneath the pines, with their black plumes spread above her, she lay prone upon it, her arms outstretched, her cheek pressed hard. Never had such a passion consumed her, and for a long while she lay thus, breath-

ing her being into the warm, fragrant, responsive soil. At last she rose slowly, feeling herself forgiven for her desertion.

She walked hurriedly out as though service in some great cathedral were ended. For quite a while she stepped quickly, slightly alarmed at the darkness that now surrounded her, and watching ahead of her for the lights of the city.

When she had climbed a small hill they came in sight, and walking a little further on she reached a horse-car track. Here she waited what seemed to her an endless time, but at last she was riding along with an old colored man, the only other occupant.

When she reached home Emily ran out to meet her. "Where have you been?" she asked breathlessly. "We've sent everywhere for you! Dave has been waiting two hours!"

"Dave?" asked Page in a low voice.

"Yes. He is in the parlor."

CHAPTER IV

LOVE

PAGE moved swiftly by Emily, entered the house and took her stand in the doorway of the parlor.

The dimensions of the old room were so large, the furniture so massive and gloomy, that she could scarcely see by the faint lamplight in one corner. For a moment her eyes strayed about and then she discovered Dave seated in a large chair, his slouch hat on the floor beside it. At her entrance he rose but paused in his advance. She sprang to him with a swift movement.

"Dave!" she cried and put out her hands.

He did not take them and with a quick backward step Page stood gazing upon him.

His head was arrogantly lifted, the light in his eyes had expired, and he had clasped his hands behind him.

She noted in a flash that he was greatly changed. All boyishness had fled from him; he had grown old and his face was grim. Stonewall Jackson might have assumed this attitude and looked thus when confronted by a deserter.

"So you are back," he said finally in a low quiet voice, "what brought you?"

"What brought me?"

He took a step forward. "Yes, what brought you?"

She advanced to him and peered up timidly into his face.

"You brought me, Dave — I came home, I came back to you!"

"You may have made a mistake."

She recoiled. "A mistake? Aren't you glad I came? What do you mean?" Her voice lowered to a whisper. "Do you mean that you don't want me?"

"No, I mean that I do not know whether I can insult my manhood by indulging that want!"

"Ah!" The word escaped her and she fell back from him with her hand over her heart.

He approached her and fixed his scrutinizing eyes upon her.

"You say that you have returned to me. *Which* you, for there are two? How do I know that I care to shoulder the you that I despise for the sake of the you that I have always adored? How do I know that that you has not perished in the other? How? Tell me!"

The cold eyes flashed a brief second.

"How do I know that you had the right to return? How do I know that you should be protected by this sacred old roof? How?"

The full meaning of his words penetrated her. She winced, drew back from him, and lost her breath for a second. When she caught it the sound was audible. She tried to speak but words failed her.

Then all of a sudden she took a deep breath, flung up her head and stood looking at him, her whole manner expressing triumph.

He gazed back at her amazed by an attitude that failed to carry to him its meaning. Then he burst forth again:

"When I heard to-day you were here I believe I went mad! Sam told me. I was in the street on

my way home, not even caring to go there, sick at heart, tired unto death. It staggered me—I believe I put out my arms to him—I felt him holding me up! Then I broke away from him and turned and came here, running, stumbling, half-blind. I forgot everything in one thought—you had come back! But seated here for two whole hours alone in this silent gloom, I had time to think, and in my thoughts my doubt of you stole back; the blackest doubt that can darken the brain of a man when he loves a woman! I doubted you! Can you think what that meant! Can you understand that suffering? Answer me!”

A smile crossed her lips but she was still speechless and he went on.

“Ah! How I have suffered since that night in New York—that night of Hell! Though every doubt of you perish as an injustice; though years might pass with you safe by my side during the day, pillowed on my breast at night, I never could think of it without a shudder—a shrinking of my entire being—for not only did I feel that you were lost to me but to yourself—to everything! I saw you walking straight along into perdition where every hour of your life, after the first glamour had passed, would be a blistering pain! You! My love! And I went through all this misery knowing that I could not interfere—that only you could save yourself and that through a higher power than mine! I believe I spent the entire night on the train in prayer, to what or to whom I did not exactly know—to God, of course, but you seemed so far away from God—to the heavens, the stars, the winds, the clouds, your own heart, the moon, the sun, the forests, all the things that you loved and were turning away from. I prayed madly,

I believe, to all these things, *your* things, and God, and they and your heart must have heard my prayers! But how do I know it was worth while?"

He paused again and she felt his eyes upon her, intently fixed as one watches an acrobat daringly poised and who may any moment fall headlong to death.

Then she laughed, the glad, merry laugh that he remembered used to sound over the hills and through the forests in her childhood.

"Dave," she cried, "look into my eyes!"

He was baffled; her manner staggered him, but he recovered himself and laughed back at her a different laugh from hers, still with a ring of doubt and insolent scorn in it.

"Look into your eyes! A woman's eyes may be but two shining lies! Do you remember where and how I last looked into them?"

She caught his arm.

"*Dave!* I repeat! Look into my eyes. Look! Look deep, deep, deep! See if in their depths you can find any guilt!"

She sprang back and faced him jubilantly. "Ah! You have a right to doubt me, I know that! But in my joy I had forgotten it! Make me suffer for that doubt! Give me pain; twist my wrists," she flung out her hands, "until I cry out; speak brutal words that shock all my being; blind me with tears; make me fall on my knees before you! Then lift me up," her laugh rang out again, "look into my eyes and read the truth! I am back and no words of yours — no torture, can take away my peace! I am glad that I went away to know this joy! Glad I was insulted — I *was* insulted — but through that insult I saw you as you are

and all the things you had tried to make me see! Can you regret those months of darkness that unveiled the light? Can you regret those hours you spent in prayer for me? Prayers when I was in danger, prayers to heaven and my heart and all the things I loved? I don't! Those prayers were heard and I was safe. I am back! I am home! The banners you told me of have all waved in my eyes to-day! I saw the words on them — Courage! Bravery! Honor! And I saw another one and the word on it was Love! All day I have been seeing that word and it meant life, new life for me — happy life! I am so happy that your words of accusation fall on deaf ears! If you could see me as I am I would appear to you as a woman on fire! I am on fire with love! I love everybody! I love myself — I love you! I love Nina! I'm going to her! I'm going to get her well! I can — I know I can!"

"Page!" Dave breathed, gazing aghast into her transfigured countenance.

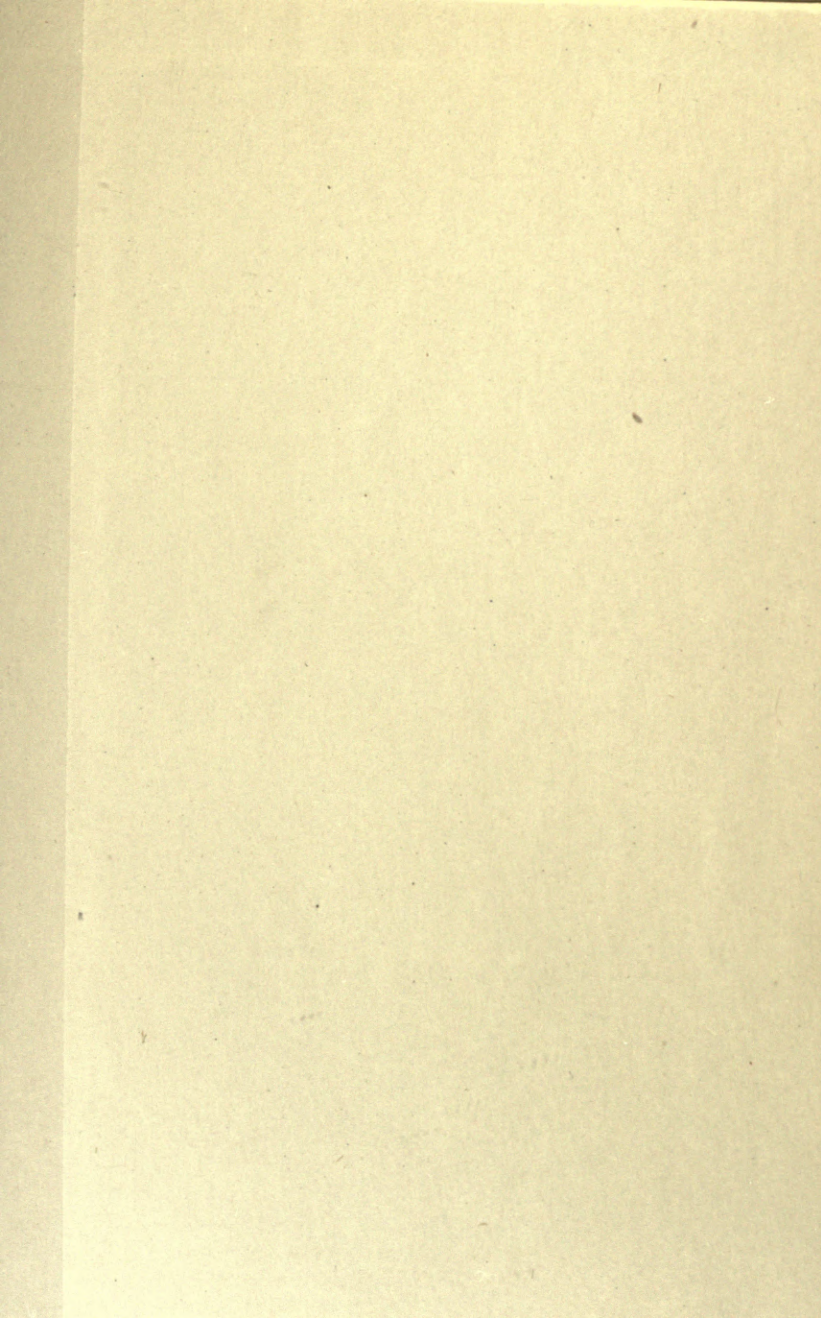
"Yes, Dave!"

"Answer me! Is this all true, or is it another of your dreams? Speak!"

He leaned forward, his eyes in hers and her hands fastened convulsively at the back of his neck.

"I do not know," she whispered, "but if it is a dream make it for me an everlasting one!"

His arms encircled her; his lips met hers, and her soul reached high tide.



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